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Thursday, 30 September 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rakhmanov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize

The Acting President *(spoke in Russian)*: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Russian)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize, His Excellency The Honourable Said Musa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Musa (Belize): We are fortunate that the great skills and integrity displayed by His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, both as freedom fighter and as Foreign Minister of Namibia, will now be at the disposal of the General Assembly. We desperately need those qualities as we wrestle with the challenges that now face our Organization.

We are enriched by the presence of our three new Members, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

We look forward to the coming millennium with great expectations born out of the many great accomplishments of this century, not least of which has been the creation and preservation of the United Nations. But we would be deceiving ourselves if we did not recognize that the world of peace and security envisioned by the drafters of the Charter is as far from achievement as it was at the beginning of this tormented century.

This has indeed been a century of extremes. We have witnessed marvelous scientific and technological advances that could liberate humankind from the drudgery and misery that have always been its lot. At the same time, we have seen more billions spent on means of destruction than on the construction of a better life for the billions who still live in poverty.

We have witnessed the spread of democracy around the globe, even as inequality between and within nations grows unabated and countless millions of lives are wasted. All too apparent are the tragic victims of the invisible hand of the market.

How much has inequality grown during this century? The 1999 *Human Development Report* of the

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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) tells us that the income gap between the fifth of the world's people living in the richest countries and the fifth living in the poorest was 11 to 1 in 1913. This had grown to 30 to 1 by 1960, 60 to 1 in 1990, and 74 to 1 in 1997. The report concludes in its "Overview", at page 2, that

> "When the market goes too far in dominating social and political outcomes, the opportunities and rewards of globalization spread unequally and inequitably — concentrating power and wealth in a select group of people, nations and corporations, marginalizing the others."

The solution, it posits, is not to stop the expansion of global markets, but to create and enforce the rules for stronger governance, both national and global, to ensure that globalization works for people, not just for profits. This crying need for good global governance is not being answered, and it is one of the most important and fundamental tasks facing the United Nations today.

During this century there have been two concerted attempts to collectively provide the framework for a new world order, following periods of catastrophic human behaviour. After the First World War the Versailles Treaty and the Paris Conference created the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and certain economic arrangements. After the Second World War we had the United Nations and the Bretton Woods agreements, which again created new institutional arrangements for regulating a new world order. One of the results of that reordering was the ushering in of the era of decolonization, whereby dozens of countries have emerged and formed part of the family of nations, bringing our number in the United Nations up to 188.

Today we have witnessed a real change in the world order no less far-reaching and momentous than the first two, with the end of the cold war, the creation of a unipolar world and the phenomena of globalization and trade liberalization. And still we have not been able to sit together and negotiate universally accepted rules and institutions that are workable and fair for regulating this new order. How can we speak of the victory of democracy in this situation?

The institutions that, more than national governments, govern the real lives of billions today — the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the G-7, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) — are dominated by a few rich and powerful countries, and there is no transparency, no accountability, no effective mechanism for civil society participation. In short, there is no good governance.

We, the developing countries, are constantly being urged by the international organizations, by the European Union and others, to practise good governance, and are threatened with sanctions if we do not. For our part, we in Belize and other developing countries accept the need for good governance and are doing our utmost to achieve it. It is time we ensured that these all-powerful organizations themselves practise good governance, abide by a global code of ethics that puts people before profits, respect the diversity of our countries and be fully accountable and transparent.

While we have made important advances in enlarging democracy at the national level, we have failed to do so at the global level. Our only hope lies with a reformed United Nations that will ensure that the global institutions that determine the quality of our lives are made democratic and just.

Small countries like Belize are understandably concerned about the way in which globalization and trade liberalization are being mismanaged. Yes, we believe in the potential benefits of globalization. Yes, we want to be involved, but as partners, not as victims of larger, more powerful economic interests.

Belize became independent just 18 years ago. It has been said that we became independent just when independence ceased to be meaningful as a result of the power of international organizations and transnational companies to determine not just international, but also national economic and social policies.

Let me say this clearly: do not expect any of us who won our independence after years of struggle — some involving armed conflict and the sacrifice of many lives — to simply give it up and accept a new form of domination. But what does it mean, especially for small developing countries, to be independent in today's world? It means that we must find a way to make interdependence make independence meaningful.

This can best be done through effective regional organizations. In our own region, our vision is to work towards a real integration of the Central American and Caribbean countries, to make the Association of Caribbean States the means of inserting our countries into

the world economy with a stronger voice to secure fair terms of trade, greater market access and more beneficial investments.

The much vaunted new financial architecture that we seek to construct must be designed to enhance the independence of sovereign States. We can only do this through negotiated agreements that are fair, transparent and consensual and in which developing countries are given a real voice.

We are heartened by the words of Mike Moore, Director-General of the WTO, who told us, members of the Group of 77, at Marrakesh that he is totally committed to ensuring that the WTO be a family in which every member has an equal place at the table and that trade liberalization bring real benefits to all countries, but especially to developing countries.

We, the smaller and developing countries, must be the beneficiaries of unselfish actions on the part of our developed partners. We are aware that free trade can be kind to the strong and deadly to the weak, and so our call is this: Give us time to adjust and move our economies forward. Help us to develop our capacities and technologies to make our people competitive. We are challenged to narrow the gap between those who earn billions and those who work for pennies.

If we are to be successful at this, everyone must be included. Our political ideologies and differences will have to be put aside in the interest of the elimination of poverty. But none of this is possible if we do not face up to meeting the first objective of our institution: the achievement of world peace and security.

True, since the inception of our Organization there has not been another world war, but local and regional conflicts have taken a more vicious toll than the two world wars combined. If we are to prevent these human tragedies, we will have to move, in the words of our Secretary-General, from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention: preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament, preventive deployment.

If only we had followed these prescriptions in East Timor, we could have prevented the large-scale massacres and destruction that were visited on an entire people in the presence of our United Nations Mission, which had assured them that they could exercise their right to self-determination in peace and security. None of us can feel comfortable with the fact that although international agencies in the field had warned of the impending massacre for months, nothing was done to prevent it. We still have the task of ensuring that the people of East Timor can live in peace and enjoy the benefits of their courageous decision to be independent, and Belize pledges its unconditional support for any measures taken by our Organization to this end.

We do not fail to recognize and applaud the tremendous success of the United Nations in the eradication of colonialism and occupation. How could we fail to do so, when the very existence of Belize as an independent State is due in no small part to the support of the United Nations? How could we fail to do so, when we recall the role of the United Nations in the independence of Namibia, whose Foreign Minister presides over our Assembly, or when we recall the work of the Fourth Committee in brokering the independence of so many of our present members? But the job is not over till it is over, not until all peoples of the world are guaranteed their right to self-determination and independence in peace and security. In this context, we look forward to welcoming Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations at the millennium summit and to achieving peace and security for all the peoples of that region.

As we leave this century of unparalleled suffering and violence, we look forward to creating a better world in the next. None of us can dare predict what awaits us. On the other hand, we must all commit ourselves to try to shape the future in ways that redound to the benefit of all human beings regardless of race, colour, sex, nationality, class, religion or political opinions.

We will not succeed in this if we do not succeed in eradicating poverty. Poverty, in the words of the President of the World Bank, is much more than a matter of income alone: the poor seek the sense of well-being which comes from peace of mind, from good health, community and safety, from choice and freedom as well as a steady source of income.

A necessary condition for the elimination of all forms of poverty is the creation of fair rules for trade and investment. As my Deputy Prime Minister said at the twenty-second special session, just recently concluded, the Seattle Round of negotiations must be characterized by a willingness to implement the necessary reforms to ameliorate the negative impact of the post-Uruguay arrangements. We — the small, vulnerable,

disadvantaged States — must benefit from trade liberalization along with our developed partners.

Those partners, however, must live up to the commitments they have made to the world over the past decades: it is scandalous that not only has the promise of dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to development assistance not been met, we are getting further from this goal every day, with barely 0.2 per cent of gross domestic product now being so dedicated.

Effective solidarity between the haves and the have nots is an essential part of the solution to the problems of marginalization and poverty. That is why we commend the actions of the Republic of China on Taiwan, which has not been reluctant to help less well-endowed countries. Taiwan is a good friend of Belize, and I would like to express here our deep condolences to the people of Taiwan for the tragic consequences of the earthquake that struck recently. It is our hope that the United Nations will be able to embrace the Republic of China on Taiwan in the family of nations, as part of a peaceful and just solution to the China question, one that respects the aspirations and rights of all Chinese people.

I would like to endorse the support of our Secretary-General for the concept of individual sovereignty in the sense of the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny. This, of course, presupposes a democratic world, one in which people have the right to participate in decisions that shape their lives. Indeed, such participation defines the very existence of people: I participate, therefore I am. But it is tantamount to putting Descartes before the horse if we do not recognize that people cannot participate effectively if they do not have access to education, to knowledge, to information. My Government has made the provision of such access its number one priority, and I urge the international community to focus its resources on assisting developing countries to empower their peoples through human-resource development programmes.

We have squandered billions of dollars and millions of lives in the real or imagined defence of State sovereignty; let us now resolve to dedicate our resources to education, the sine qua non for the realization of personal sovereignty. We all want a better, more just, more peaceful and secure world, and to achieve this we must have a world free of the culture of violence and instant gratification, from the scourge of drug-trafficking: we need a world of tolerance and solidarity. None of this is possible without education.

People everywhere, but especially in the underdeveloped countries, are asking what there is to celebrate as we enter the new millennium. The least we can do, the least we owe our people, is tell them the truth and face the reality together. Let us not pretend that the future is bright and untroubled, or that we have the answers to all the problems that plague humanity. Let us instead resolve to work together to harness the power of technology, of science, of the marketplace, so that they act for instead of against humanity.

Other speakers before me have called for a new century of human development, for the creation of a new global human order. This dream can become reality when, at last, the powerful agree to sit down with the rest of us as equals and together design the political, economic and social architecture that will ensure global prosperity along with global justice. Only then will the world live in peace and proclaim, in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

> "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

Amen.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Said Musa, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Foreign Affairs of Belize was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, His Excellency Sheik Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani.

Sheik Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I extend my congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I wish him success in guiding the work of the Assembly.

It gives me great pleasure to extend my thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his effective work

as President of the Assembly at its previous session. I wish him similar success in his future endeavours.

Allow me on this occasion to congratulate the three new Members on their admission to the United Nations. Allow me also, on behalf of my Government, to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, for his tireless work and laudable efforts in the midst of an international situation that can be described — at best — as difficult and complicated.

Of course the international situation is truly difficult and complicated. It is no coincidence that as we meet in this forum to discuss the affairs and state of the world today — at this, the last session of the century, the beginning of a new century, a new age that we once hoped would be different from the old — we find ourselves obliged to discuss the same problems and the same disputes that we have been facing for over half a century. Is this not truly deplorable and even outrageous? Does not this reality constitute categorical evidence that all of us — States, peoples and regional and international organizations — have failed to learn enough from the lessons of the past, that we have not benefited from our past experiences enough and that we have not sought as much as we should have, to overcome our past limitations and shortcomings?

What do we see when we look at our world today? We see bloody conflicts that we have not yet been able to stop and chronic crises that still await solutions that would end the spiral of violence and suffering. Moreover, we find that the world remains reluctant or even unable to address problems and crises that are far removed, in terms of content, from the course of daily politics but whose effects and ramifications are no less dangerous than the topical crises and conflicts that threaten our existence. We must ask ourselves: What have we done, as we stand on the threshold of the third millennium, to prepare ourselves to meet the challenges of poverty, misery, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, the spread of epidemics and the exploitation of children?

What have we done to prepare ourselves to cope with the dangers of organized crime, international terrorism and drug trafficking? Have we really understood the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that they may be used at any time and anywhere?

What of the real dangers besetting our planet as a result of environmental degradation, climate change, the scarcity of water resources, the shortage of raw materials, the deteriorating phenomena of drought and desertification and the increasing frequency of natural disasters?

Have we at least begun to draft guidelines and comprehensive universal plans to confront these global threats, which do not differentiate between nationalities, races, colours or creeds and which most certainly recognize no political, geographical, economic and social borders among nations and peoples?

Simply put, have we, as States, Governments and international organizations, begun adjusting our priorities so as to place the goals of development, progress, education, health, high living standards and decent life for our peoples ahead of the aims of conflict, disputes and vengeance, no matter how historical, profound or sensitive?

I cannot answer yes to any of these questions. There is nothing in this statement to criticize anyone or detract from their resolve or intentions. It is a sad universal reality that requires our cooperation and joint efforts if we truly hope to prepare ourselves for the future and its tasks and changes. To that end, I see no better or more comprehensive framework for this mission than this international Organization, which we believe to be the qualified and appropriate institution for defining the future of our world. All of us, regardless of our interests and our narrow, topical political calculations, must provide the United Nations and its agencies with all the means necessary for it to play such an important role.

We are convinced that this can be achieved only with universal will, for in the final analysis, the United Nations is the sum total of its Member States. We are also convinced of the need to reform the United Nations and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its bodies and agencies. Similarly, it is incumbent upon us, the States Members of the Organization, to assume our political responsibility and respect our moral and financial commitments to it. Furthermore, in this context, we support the idea of expanding the Security Council to make it more democratic and representative of the international community in the modern world. We also support the idea of expanding the permanent membership of the Council so as to ensure greater universal representation on it. The same applies to restricting the use of the veto by the permanent members and to regulating the capacity to use this right under agreed and specific terms and conditions.

It is perhaps not exaggerated optimism or expectation on my part when I say that we consider this to be an essential and vital step towards consecrating the sound concept of globalization, as we see it and as it must be in the twenty-first century. We believe that globalization must be a comprehensive mechanism in the service of the general welfare of all nations and peoples. If its benefits are confined to certain States and societies, to the exclusion of others, it will fail to achieve its objectives.

On this basis, we believe that globalization should be the means by which we promote cooperation, interaction and openness among the peoples and societies of the world. We can thus steer globalization away from the pitfalls of narrow exploitation and short-term profit and towards a universal scope whose benefits and returns reach everyone. It is here that we feel that a new and extremely vital role will emerge for the United Nations in the twenty-first century — a role in which the Organization will assume leadership of the trend towards globalization and consecrate it, especially in the fields of cooperation, cultural and educational exchanges, social and economic development, the defence of human rights, strengthening peace and stability and consolidating the bases of cultural openness among nations and peoples.

We will thus have taken the first essential steps towards the establishment of the new international order that we thought we had achieved at the end the cold war and the age of international polarization, which lasted 50 years after the end of the Second World War. The new international order to which we aspired did not materialize. Unfortunately, and in spite of the many initiatives and indications that had once seemed encouraging, the world instead soon fell into a new spiral of disagreements, disputes and regional, bilateral and internal conflicts. These seemed to be the direct results of the political vacuum left in the wake of the cold war. At the same time, new conflicts and disputes have joined the series of historically chronic crises that have plagued our world for decades and for which no effective solutions have been found.

We may discuss the future and a new world in which we seek to achieve the aspirations of all peoples to prosperity, progress and stability, but the priority of spending on arms and military purposes still prevails over all others, especially in the developing and poor regions of the world, where the need for resources for social and economic growth and development is paramount. In the meantime, economic conditions in these regions continue to deteriorate, social crises are exacerbated and living standards are plummeting ever faster.

Naturally, these are not the only problems. In the midst of such a vicious circle, the political crises facing these societies are intensified in turn and soon evolve into significant threats, not only to their security and internal fabric, but also to their neighbours. Particularly disturbing is the fact that this phenomenon has spread and expanded into several regions of the world. In this regard, and on behalf of my country, Qatar, I cannot but express satisfaction at the results of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operation in the Balkans.

In the same context, my Government has followed with concern the events that have unfolded in East Timor in recent weeks. Qatar hopes for the success of the international efforts currently under way to restore peace and security. At the same time, we stress the hope that the Republic of Indonesia will transcend this difficult ordeal and reclaim its prominent position in South-East Asia and in the ranks of the international community as a whole.

While some recent developments have provided relatively reassuring indications of the possibility of settling regional and internal conflicts, given the resolve and the international will to do so, we find it necessary to recall here that we would have preferred that such international endeavours had taken place in a pre-emptive context that would have prevented the crises and the ensuing tragedies and suffering, instead of subsequent efforts aimed at salvaging whatever remained to be salvaged.

We express this concern and call for further international efforts to settle crises and to put an end to wars and conflicts because we in the State of Qatar profoundly believe in the right of peoples to live in freedom and peace. We also believe in the need to establish international relations on the basis of friendship, cooperation, mutual respect, common interests and good-neighbourliness. Proceeding from this, my country stands firmly and unambiguously in support of the settlement of differences and disputes in the Gulf region by peaceful means and through dialogue, negotiations, or international arbitration in order to consolidate security and stability in the region.

We also wish to place on record my Government's satisfaction at some of the positive developments and encouraging signs that we have noticed during the past months regarding the settlement of a number of questions that have long been a source of concern in our region. We welcome the progress made in settling the Lockerbie

matter and congratulate our Libyan brothers on that, hoping that this file will be closed and this matter concluded as soon as possible and in a way that will ensure the rights and interests of all parties.

Notwithstanding the positive indications and trends, which we welcome and hope will be strengthened, the general regional situation is still, to our great regret, far removed from the comprehensive peace, the lasting stability and the modes of cooperation, development and progress that we seek and desire for our region. The Iraqi crisis and its continuous repercussions on security and stability in the Gulf and the Middle East, and the cruel suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people, are all elements that cause great concern and prompt us to do our utmost in order to put an end to this crisis. We believe it is high time that we overcame the Iraqi crisis and found effective solutions to it so that the sanctions imposed against Iraq can be lifted and the cruel suffering of its peoples can be terminated. We have always resorted to diplomatic solutions, in accordance with international resolutions, in order to ensure the preservation of the territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq and to spare it and the entire region further dangers and agony.

There naturally remains the essential question, which in our view has been the main source of tension and crises in our region for more than half a century, and that is the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. I must say that we in the State of Qatar, together with our Arab brothers, have committed ourselves to peace as a permanent strategic option, a commitment which still stands. However, the peace process has regrettably failed to attain its envisaged results. Rather, this process has suffered setbacks over the past years, the responsibility for which, in our view, lies with the former Israeli Government, which opted to retreat from its commitments and pursued policies that prevented any progress in the peace process and in negotiations on its various tracks.

We welcome the changes that have taken place in the Israeli Government as a result of the recent general elections and in light of the formation of the new Government under the leadership of Mr. Ehud Barak and his stated intention to pursue peace more earnestly. However, we feel that such gestures must be coupled with concrete steps that would demonstrate good faith on the Israeli side and sincere readiness to meet its obligations by implementing the agreements concluded on all tracks during the previous stages of the negotiations, and to seek a resumption of the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as soon as possible, on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace.

Perhaps it suffices here to recall the recent affirmation by His Highness, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar, in explaining my country's firm position on this matter. In our view, there can be no solution to this conflict nor peace in the Middle East except through a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement, based on the established principles that form the foundations of the peace process. This means the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the border of 4 June 1967 and from southern Lebanon and its western Bekaa valley, to the internationally recognized borders, and the regaining by the Palestinian people of their legitimate national and political rights, foremost among which is their natural right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital: the city of peace, the land of tolerance and the cradle of divine revelations, where religions have always coexisted in harmony and concord.

We must express concern over the continued presence of weapons of mass destruction in the region, especially nuclear weapons that are available exclusively to one side, the Israeli side. In our view, this constitutes a strategic imbalance and a threat to peace and security. Therefore, we believe in the need for the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction from our region, as an integral and complementary part of the peace process. We also call on Israel to accede to the international treaties providing for the limitation and non-proliferation of such weapons.

Peace, in our view, cannot be one-sided, nor can its benefits accrue exclusively on one side. Therefore, we sincerely look forward to the day when a balanced, just, comprehensive and genuine peace reigns in our region. Then we can speak of such advantages and benefits of peace as security, cooperation, stability, prosperity and progress for all the States and peoples in our region without exception.

We look forward to that day because we truly yearn to see a new Middle East, which enters the new millennium in a climate of peace, security and democracy; a climate in which we all respect pluralism of opinions, diversity of approaches and the right of peoples and States to self-determination, to better living

standards and to living in freedom, prosperity and dignity, in conformity with their lofty beliefs and values. This is one of the basic human rights we cherish. Our belief stems foremost from our profound belief in God Almighty and in His divine revelations with which He blessed all mankind.

This process of working for a better future and for our peoples imbues us with the utmost hope that we will be able to achieve the objective of building a new world worthy of our young generations which will inhabit it in the third millennium. As we are about to draw the curtain on an old century and welcome the dawn of a new one, we must pledge to our children that we will do our utmost so that their world will be a better world, more capable and better equipped to respond to their ambitions and aspirations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency the Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): It is a distinct pleasure to address the Assembly with a distinguished son of Africa and a veteran freedom fighter in the presidency. His election to preside over this last session of the closing millennium is a fitting tribute to his outstanding qualities. I congratulate him warmly and assure him of the total support and cooperation of my delegation.

We also thank His Excellency Mr. Opertti for the excellent manner in which he presided over the work of the fifty-third session. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose strong commitment to the cause of the United Nations needs hardly be emphasized, has continued to lead the Organization with vision, vigour and great dedication.

Mauritius welcomes very warmly the admission of the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Kiribati and the Republic of Nauru to the United Nations.

The curtain will soon fall on our eventful twentieth century, a century of tremendous achievements by mankind. The wide world has been reduced to a global village through progress in the field of science and technology during this century. The political map of the world has undergone tremendous transformation. It is hardly recognizable from what it used to be at this century's outset. Today, our world is made of independent nations, with peoples themselves in charge of their destinies. On the other hand, we did experience the horrors of wars in the first half of the century but decided never to let it happen again. We created the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War as a forum for all nations to carry forward together a common pledge for lasting world peace and promote development and progress for all humanity.

During this century man has paradoxically also created weapons of mass destruction that threaten his very existence. Disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, remains a major preoccupation for all of us as we step into the new millennium. The United Nations, representing the collective conscience of nations, has endeavoured to serve humanity and the cause of peace and development. The United Nations is the sole mechanism through which universal peace can be secured. We unanimously agree also that reforms to the Charter of the United Nations are necessary — indeed, overdue — as in its present form it does not reflect the tremendous changes the world has undergone since the Organization was founded half a century ago.

It is now almost six years since the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. Progress has been slow and has taken place on a limited set of issues only.

What is lacking for the process to move forward is political will on the part of some members. The fact is that the Security Council in its present form is neither adequately representative nor sufficiently transparent in its work for its decisions to be universally accepted.

Mauritius supports the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on the reform of the Security Council. We appeal to all Members of the United Nations to work together constructively and advance the much needed reform process expeditiously.

While the international community has largely been successful in averting global wars, armed conflicts have continued to endanger national, regional and international peace. In particular, the African continent has continued to be afflicted with conflicts, the worst being the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the continued civil war in Angola.

However, the international community should take comfort in the fact that the leaders on the African continent have spared no efforts to find solutions and restore peace in the countries and areas in question. Through tireless and extensive efforts of African leaders, the OAU and the United Nations, and all the parties concerned in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have signed the Lusaka Agreement in order to restore peace and stability in the country. One of the fundamental aspects of the Agreement is the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force, with the task of ensuring that all parties respect the terms of the Lusaka Agreement. We deplore the fact that the United Nations peacekeeping force has still not assumed its crucial responsibility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call upon the Security Council to give due priority to this matter so that a peacekeeping force is dispatched expeditiously, as delay to do so may imperil the implementation of the Agreement.

The rebellion in Angola continues because of arms supplies from outside to the forces of destabilization. The Security Council is fully apprised of this and confident that those guilty of breaking the embargo on arms supply to UNITA will be identified and held responsible. The people of Angola have indeed suffered too long. We therefore appeal to all nations to take necessary steps to ensure that unscrupulous elements do not channel weapons to the forces of rebellion in Angola out of their greed of monetary windfalls. The international community needs to intensify its efforts to end the rebellion in Angola.

The armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended with the signing recently of an agreement with the help of the OAU and several African leaders and friendly countries. We hope that the spirit in which the two countries have agreed to end their differences will continue and that lasting peace will return to the region. We are also heartened by the fact that an agreement has been signed between the parties concerned to end the internal strife in Sierra Leone. We are confident that peace and stability will now return to Sierra Leone.

In the Comoros, forces of destabilization have continued to thwart the return to normalcy. Through tireless efforts by the OAU and countries of the region, a conference of all the Comoros parties concerned was held earlier this year in Madagascar with a view to reaching an agreement under which peace and stability would return to the Comoros and territorial integrity and sovereignty would be maintained. Unfortunately, the military coup derailed the whole process. We therefore call for the establishment of democratic rule in the Comoros so that the agreement reached at the Antananarivo conference can be fully implemented.

The Kosovo conflict has distressed us all. We have witnessed the horrors of ethnic cleansing, massive disruption of the life of a people and terrible destruction inflicted on a country. We must all remember many messages from the events in Kosovo. Humanity will not sit idly by when people are flagrantly subjected to genocide for reason of ethnic bigotry or political expediency. Quick-fix military action to resolve deep-rooted problems is not necessarily the best option. The United Nations remains the most appropriate mechanism for addressing issues that relate to maintenance of international peace and security.

Mauritius is deeply distressed by the violence in East Timor, the loss of so many innocent lives and the terrible sufferings inflicted on the Timorese people in the aftermath of the recent referendum. We welcome the action undertaken by the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to restore peace and security on the island. The verdict of the referendum must be respected by the Indonesian Government and all parties concerned.

In the Middle East, the determination shown by the new Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Ehud Barak, to move the peace process forward, together with President Arafat, is most encouraging not only to the parties concerned in the region but also to the international community as a whole. This moment of great optimism must be seized in order to work out a comprehensive and just settlement that will bring lasting peace and stability to the region.

In 1996 our delegation, led by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, drew special attention to the situation in Fiji. We are pleased that the new constitutional process under which general elections were recently held has removed the iniquities which were written into that nation's Constitution before. We welcome this change and congratulate the people of Fiji on their courage and determination to bring the change in a democratic and peaceful manner.

(spoke in French)

Conflicts and wars, even after they have ended, invariably leave serious humanitarian situations behind them. The humanitarian crises in Africa seem of little interest to the cameras of international television

networks. There are more than 12 million people who need urgent humanitarian assistance in Africa. The humanitarian agencies have received only $352 million although their needs for Africa in 1999 are in the order of $796 million.

Peacemaking efforts must be supported by effective humanitarian aid, especially for refugees. The host countries, already faced with their own difficulties, cannot take on this heavy burden. To give lasting peace a real chance, it is also necessary to support the return of refugees so as to make the stabilization of society possible. A special financing effort on the part of the international community is necessary to that end.

(spoke in English)

Respect for human rights is of primordial importance for the prevention of conflicts and for the maintenance of durable peace. We believe that all countries should make strict adherence to the human rights instruments of the United Nations a matter of national priority. We in Mauritius always place human rights high on our national and international agenda. Mauritius was honoured to host the First OAU ministerial conference on human rights, held earlier this year in the context of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The conference reviewed the human rights situation in Africa and adopted a declaration and plan of action which aim at strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights.

We have witnessed gross violations of human rights, particularly under military regimes. In this regard, the decision at the recent OAU summit in Algiers to exclude from that organization those leaders who assume power in the continent through military coups is an important step that will help the cause of democracy and human rights.

Mr. Essy (Cote d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mauritius has welcomed the International Criminal Court and was amongst the first to ratify the Statute establishing it. We look forward to an early conclusion of the work of our experts who are currently engaged in finalizing the rules to enable the International Criminal Court to commence its work.

The easy availability of light and small-calibre weapons has given rise to numerous conflicts, particularly in Africa. These small arms, besides exacerbating conflicts, give rise to social disruption, insecurity, instability, violence and crime. In view of the magnitude of the problem, the OAU summit in Algiers last July decided to convene a regional conference to address the issue fully. We urge the international community to take measures to control the flow of small arms.

Disarmament is essential for international peace. It is regrettable that the threat of nuclear holocaust will accompany humanity into the new millennium because of the international community's failure to work out a regime for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty we have taken important steps on the issue of nuclear disarmament, but these alone cannot eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. Mauritius continues to be firmly of the belief that the best way for the international community to address the nuclear disarmament issue effectively is to establish a clear timetable for nuclear-weapon Powers to commit themselves to dismantle all nuclear weapons and for all nations to commit themselves to not develop such weapons in the future. So far we have adopted half-way measures only; it is time for a bold step to be taken that would eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.

Chemical weapons, as weapons of mass destruction, can inflict untold miseries on their victims. The Convention on Chemical Weapons — a very significant achievement — must be adhered to by all nations, particularly countries that have chemical weapons in their possession.

The lives of many people around the world, in Africa in particular, continue to be affected by landmines. We believe it is the responsibility of all nations to address this problem collectively. We appeal to those countries that have not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines to do so and also to contribute financially to the efforts to remove all landmines.

Peace, security and development are indivisible and mutually reinforcing. As we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century we have a historic opportunity to create a long-term visionary strategy for the sustainable development of all countries of the world, in particular African States, and thus promote international peace and security. This is extremely important if we really want to avoid the marginalization in the wake of the irreversible process of globalization and unbridled liberalization. It is increasingly being realized that market forces alone

cannot resolve the problems of poverty, deprivation and marginalization, particularly in Africa, which comprises the largest number of least-developed countries. The United Nations system, in our view, has an important role to play in this respect as there is a crying need for coherence in the formulation and implementation of policies in the trade, finance and social sectors.

It is true that globalization brings both challenges and opportunities, but to many developing countries the challenges are proving overwhelming. But there does not seem to be any alternative, in a world characterized by the *"pensee unique"*, to making the necessary adjustments to join a fast globalizing world economy. Higher levels of investment; technology transfer; and institutional, human resource and infrastructure capacity-building, will be required especially for African countries, if they are to make the necessary transition.

The developed world and the major financial and trading organizations must be not only cognizant of the situation but also responsive to the constraints on and needs of the developing world in general and the least-developed countries and vulnerable small island developing States in particular.

The heavy debt burden, the declining level of official development assistance — which currently stands at 0.22 per cent of gross domestic product compared to the target of 0.7 per cent — and insignificant private investment flows into Africa do not allow many African countries to implement successfully the necessary adjustment programmes to compete effectively in the world market. Only decisive action to resolve the debt problem can provide the necessary impetus.

Although we recognize that the Cologne Summit initiative represents an improvement over the original Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, we believe that the unsustainable debt of Africa — which contains 33 of the 41 HIPC countries — should be written off, for only then can those countries embark on the path of sustainable growth and development.

In that connection, we welcome the recently announced plan to cancel $27 billion of debt owed by the poorest countries to allow them to use those resources to finance education and health, which are important in dealing with the problem of poverty.

We also commend the World Bank for establishing the $400 million Infrastructure Investment Fund, whose advisory board will be headed by Mr. Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa.

Capacity-building in all sectors of the economy is important if developing countries are to benefit from the opportunities arising from globalization and trade liberalization. But in view of the lack of a level playing field and the inherent obstacles facing African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, it is imperative for them to continue to benefit from trade preferences in the European Union under the successor to the fourth ACP-CEE Convention of Lomé for a sufficiently long transitional period before they implement any alternative trade arrangement.

The euphoria created following the signing of the Marrakesh agreement in 1994 after the conclusion of the Uruguay Round has been short-lived; many developing countries today recognize that they are overburdened with World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments and obligations. There is indeed a growing recognition that implementation of these commitments is simply beyond their capacity, or rather that there is a limit to trade liberalization and deregulation.

It is, therefore, important to allow developing countries flexibility within the world trading system to implement policies in harmony with their sustainable development needs. The provisions on special and differential treatment in all areas covered by WTO agreements should be fully and effectively implemented. In this regard, it is also crucial that the multilateral trading system should facilitate the process of regional integration, because for many countries regional integration is an important step towards their integration into the global economy.

We welcome and support the recent OAU decision to accelerate implementation of the 1991 Abuja Treaty for the establishment of an African Economic Community. This process could be facilitated by effective implementation of the United States of America-Africa Blueprint adopted in March 1999 and more importantly, of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. We urge the United States to ensure early passage of this long-standing Bill with its original provisions on textiles and clothing.

Two days ago, I had the opportunity in my address to the recent Assembly special session to highlight both the inherent constraints on small island developing countries and their development needs. The special

session gave us an opportunity to review the implementation of the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS): we must take the process further to embrace other issues, such as concessional loans and trade preferences for SIDS.

I reiterate my appeal to the international community to give special attention to the plight of SIDS, in terms both of providing financial resources, and of encouraging foreign direct investment, and also in the context of the negotiations for the third WTO Ministerial Conference, in Seattle. We must ensure that the Conference, which is to be held later this year, addresses the marginalization of small economies and the problems of developing countries that are net importers of food by adopting specific and practical measures. We must also see to it that the Seattle Round of multilateral trade negotiations is a "development round" that puts the issue of development firmly on the international agenda. The WTO negotiations in Seattle should be broad-based and should provide a balanced outcome from which all countries will benefit.

In this connection, it should be emphasized that agricultural trade is of vital importance to a number of developing countries, in particular to small economies including small and vulnerable island developing States. In the agricultural trade negotiations we should give just as much importance to non-trade issues such as food security, environmental protection and the viability of rural populations.

These are vital issues for Mauritius, and for many other SIDS and small economics and small economies. And that is why we are emphasizing the multifunctionality of agriculture. Planting sugar cane, which is the only crop suitable to our difficult terrains, and which is resistant to adverse climatic conditions like cyclones and droughts, also contributes to environmental protection by providing a renewable source of energy. Sugar exports earnings assure food security. Many small island developing countries are in the same situation as Mauritius. We would therefore urge that this important dimension be fully taken into account in the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

Economic growth by itself does not bring about sustainable socio-economic development. Social development should continue to be given due consideration by our Organization. We therefore welcome the follow-up conferences on social development and on women, which will be organized next year.

For the majority of small States, the United Nations continues to be the main bulwark against infringements on their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We have consistently drawn the attention of the Assembly to the issue of the Chagos Archipelago, which was detached from Mauritius by the former colonial Power prior to our independence in 1968, and also to the plight of over 2000 people who were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for generations, for resettlement in Mauritius. This was done in total disregard of the United Nations declaration embodied in resolution 1514 (XV), of 14 December 1960, and resolution 2066 (XX), of 16 December 1965, which prohibit the dismemberment of colonial Territories prior to independence.

Mauritius has repeatedly asked for the return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, on which a United States military base has been built, and thereby the restoration of its territorial integrity. The over 2,000 displaced Ilois people have been facing tremendous difficulties in adapting in mainland Mauritius, in spite of all the efforts that Mauritius has made to assist them in this process.

So far the issue has been discussed within the framework of our friendly relations with the United Kingdom, with a view to arriving at an acceptable solution. Unfortunately, there has not been significant progress. The United Kingdom has been maintaining that the Chagos Archipelago will be returned to Mauritius only when it is no longer required for defence purposes by the West. While we continue the dialogue for an early resolution of the issue on a bilateral basis, we urge the United Kingdom in the meantime to allow the displaced inhabitants to return to the Chagos Archipelago. At the dawn of the new millennium, when we so strongly uphold universal recognition of and respect for fundamental human rights, the inhabitants of Chagos should not continue to be denied the right to return to the Chagos Archipelago.

The restoration of the territorial integrity of the State of Mauritius will not be complete without the return of Tromelin. We therefore call upon France to resume constructive discussions with us on the question of Tromelin.

This is the last session of the General Assembly for this century. When we meet next year it will be a new millennium. The question that comes to our minds is whether we want to come back next year and discuss the same issues and the same problems. Should we not,

rather, make a pledge here and now that by the time we meet next year we will have taken the necessary measures that will put an end to regional and ethnic problems and to the abuse of human rights, and will instead create the necessary environment to enable the human race to enjoy basic freedom and basic rights in peace and prosperity? Mauritius is ready to make such a pledge.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada.

Mr. Adada (Congo) *(spoke in French)*: I wish to join the many previous speakers who have congratulated the President. I congratulate him most warmly on behalf of the Congolese delegation on his election to preside over the fifty-fourth session, which is a tribute to him personally and to his country, a symbol of the struggle for decolonization in Africa. The Congo, an old friend of Namibia, welcomes his election. I am convinced that thanks to his human qualities and his wealth of experience forged in the liberation struggle and at the head of his country's diplomacy, the work of this session will be carried out harmoniously and successfully. I assure him of the support of my delegation in the discharge of his heavy responsibilities.

To his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, we express our profound gratitude for the ability and skill with which he conducted the work of the last session.

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, we pay a well-deserved tribute for his profound commitment to the service of peace and development.

Lastly, I would like to welcome warmly the new Member States of Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, whose admission can only strengthen the universal nature of the United Nations.

Has not the time come to take stock of our common labour? Will the great family of the United Nations enter the third millennium convinced that it has contributed to promoting the noble ideals contained in the Charter of our universal Organization? Have international peace and security, the development of nations and the rights of citizens been treated in a way that allows us to enter the next century calmly and with hope?

In Africa there are still far too many causes for concern. Far too many challenges leave us doubtful, despite some positive events in the continent, in particular the political changes in South Africa and Nigeria.

In Angola, the many statements and decisions of the international community remain unimplemented because of Jonas Savimbi's stubborn adherence to the logic of war. The war in Angola, which has rendered fruitless the efforts of an entire generation of diplomats, has revealed the limits of our Organization in the restoration of peace. This is the occasion to reaffirm that the solid basis for a definitive resolution of the conflict remains the effective implementation of comprehensive mandatory sanctions. They alone will lead to the complete isolation of Mr. Jonas Savimbi and UNITA, so long as the international community truly complies.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we welcome the conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement, which opens the way to resolving the political and military crisis in that fraternal country. My country is counting on the commitment of the various protagonists for the Agreement's implementation. We strongly hope that the observer mission planned by the United Nations will be effective and that it will create favourable conditions for the holding of a Great Lakes regional conference, which the international community is calling for wholeheartedly.

The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is another major concern in Africa. We invite those two fraternal peoples to rise above the situation by fully supporting the peace plan of the Organization of African Unity to put an end to that war.

Lastly, we cannot fail to pay tribute to the courage displayed by the authorities of Sierra Leone, who have agreed to pay a very high price for the restoration of peace in that country.

In this world, in which the universality of principles is often limited by force, great men can be guided only by the interests of their peoples. A year ago, from this very rostrum, I proclaimed our faith in the future of our country following the civil war that started on 5 June 1997. I said then that for the Congolese Government the future was national reconciliation, the restoration of peace, the reconstruction of the country and the resumption of the democratic process. We have explained this great project wherever and whenever we could — at the United Nations, at the Organization of African Unity and in all our contacts with all of our partners —

and we have found understanding and attention everywhere.

In the context of the resumption of the democratic process, we have carried out an administrative census of the population in order to identify the electorate, we have elaborated a draft Constitution; and we have established our higher courts — the Supreme Court and the High Court of Justice.

Regrettably, this impetus has been hampered by a resumption of violence, orchestrated once again by those who on several occasions plunged our people into mourning — first in 1993-1994 and then in 1997 — and whose only aim is the partition of Congo into ethnic ghettos.

The consequences have been catastrophic for the entire country. These have included heinous crimes such as the assassination of officials and leaders of local communities, the kidnapping of tens of thousands of people to serve as human shields for the armed groups, and the systematic destruction of infrastructures vital to the economy of the country.

But those plans to overthrow institutions have failed. Today the pacification efforts made by the Government have borne fruit. The fighting has ended. Several former militia members of the failed regime have laid down their weapons and have given themselves up to the authorities. We are also seeing a mass influx of civilians back into Brazzaville and to the main towns in the interior.

The guests who did us the honour of participating in the Pan-African Music Festival that the city of Brazzaville hosted from 1 to 8 August 1999 witnessed the determination of the Government and the entire people to rebuild this country as a haven of peace. That event — a time of great joy and reunion for the Congolese people — strengthened our conviction that the worst was behind us and that henceforth we could look to the future with calmness and optimism.

All of these steps forward on the path of peace are to the credit of one man, President Denis Sassou Nguesso. His faith in reconciliation and national unity was again made clear on 14 August 1999 on the occasion of the national holiday, when, on behalf of the fraternal republic, he solemnly reaffirmed his desire for dialogue and decided to grant amnesty to all combatants guilty of war crimes who agreed to renounce violence and definitively to lay down their weapons.

In this same context of a return to a stable situation under full control throughout the national territory, the Government reiterates its firm and unswerving will to resume the inter-Congolese political dialogue with a view to pacification and reunion in order to consolidate the newfound peace and security, strengthen national unity and the reconciliation of all the sons and daughters of the Congo, rebuild the country on a lasting basis, and resume the democratic process, which had been interrupted by violence.

The offer made was favourably received, leading in particular to the return to Brazzaville of many political leaders who had gone into exile following the war of 5 June 1997. We are confident in the positive outcome of this process.

In the wake of such a tragic period, naturally we are striving to cope with emergency situations. These include the shelter, management and social reintegration of tens of thousands of displaced persons, a humanitarian tragedy whose scale has not always been clearly perceived by the international community; the protection of people and property; the respect of human rights; and the restoration of normal living conditions in many war-torn communities — an overwhelming task that anyone would agree requires means exceeding by far the capacities of a State bled dry such as Congo is today.

We are assuming all of our responsibilities, and here we call on the international community, which should accompany our efforts with greater commitment and contribute, as it wishes to do, to the restoration on a lasting basis of peace, security and democracy and to the reconstruction of Congo.

At a time when our people are suffering from poverty and destitution and from the economic crisis, there is no place for conflicts that are both fratricidal and suicidal.

In the context of the quest for sustainable and lasting peace and development in Africa, specific and practical measures must be resolutely taken along the lines of the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General of our Organization. Among those conclusions, which we unanimously supported, I would like to mention those relating to the proliferation of, and illicit traffic in, small arms, which is an important factor in the increase in terrorism and crime in our States.

That is why, at the thirty-fifth Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held last July in Algiers, the African Heads of State and Government devoted most of their consideration to ways and means of consolidating peace in order to create modern States based on the primacy of law, respect of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, and the democratic governance of public affairs.

Along the same lines, on 20 September last, at the opening of the general debate, the current Chairman of the OAU, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, clearly set out in this very Hall Africa's views on the key questions of peace, security, economic development and international cooperation. The Congo associates itself fully with that important declaration.

I cannot conclude this political analysis without mentioning other areas of tension that are a source of concern for us at this session. Thus we express the hope that the impetus provided by the Wye River accords and the Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum on the Middle East will be consolidated. The Government of the Congo is also closely following the evolution of the situation in East Timor and welcomes the efforts of the international community, which led to the dispatch of an international force to restore peace in that territory and to ensure the respect of the political will clearly expressed by that people during the referendum organized by the United Nations.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, building peace and security in the world requires real commitment on our part to work for economic and social development. In this context, our planet can never be certain of lasting peace so long as there is destitution and poverty, which not only affect the quality of human life but are also a cause of political instability.

But how can we achieve lasting sustainable development when the world economy is opening up no encouraging prospects for developing countries, when debt receives discriminatory treatment in initiatives whose conditions for implementation show how illusory they are, when resources allocated to official development assistance are constantly declining, and lastly, when there is a clear refusal to grant developing countries opportunities to integrate their economies into the new trade system.

In any case, because of what is at stake, globalization will be the main challenge of the next century. Today it is giving rise to fears because of the threat it implies to the sovereignty of our States and to our cultural and historical characteristics, and because it raises grave questions about our countries' prospects for development. Its implementation calls more than ever for the creation of appropriate, agreed-upon mechanisms so as to translate into reality hopes for humankind's unified development and for prosperity shared among peoples.

It was in this context that recently, at Algiers and at Sirte, that the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the Organization of African Unity resolutely committed themselves to working for the strengthening of subregional economic groups, in accordance with the spirit of the Abuja Treaty.

The coming century will bring with it challenges for our Organization. Overcoming them will require harmonized approaches taken in a representative context. Thus my country attaches particular importance to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations and to the restructuring of its main bodies, so as to combat the uncertainties born of an unequal world and to take firm steps to make multilateralism truly democratic. The United Nations remains an irreplaceable tool. However, it deserves to be rethought and revitalized so that it will be equal to the challenges confronting us.

To succeed, we will need to join together the will, the efforts and the means of the whole of the international community. Congo reaffirms its commitment to make its full contribution to the achievement of that goal.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am confident that the struggle for freedom of his friendly country, Namibia, and his wide-ranging knowledge of international issues will facilitate his lofty task and will lead the deliberations of the Assembly at this important session to a successful conclusion.

I should like to express my thanks to the Foreign Minister of Uruguay for his efforts and wise leadership of our deliberations in the General Assembly during the previous session. I should also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General of our Organization,

Mr. Kofi Annan, for his attempts to uphold the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Syrian Arab Republic welcomes the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations. We are confident that the presence of these States in the international community will buttress the role of the United Nations and uphold its principles.

Leaving the last century of the second millennium and entering the first century of the third millennium does not in itself mean the end of an era and the beginning of a new one in the life of humankind. States and peoples will take with them into the next century their concerns, aspirations, successes, failures, challenges and hopes. They will continue as usual to follow their economic, educational, political and social development plans and programmes, knowing that the end of the twentieth century will not automatically mean an end to current regional conflicts. Neither will it automatically raise levels of development or rid developing countries of the debt burdens under which they are languishing.

If the advocates of market theories and globalization, and their political leaders, were to recognize that at present the poor are becoming poorer while the rich become richer and that the gap between developing and developed countries is becoming wider in every area — whether in the economic, commercial, technical, health or environmental spheres — an element of pessimism would, unfortunately, mar the feeling of optimism with which we hope to welcome the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Optimism about the future is desirable because it prevents humanity, both at individual and society levels, from falling into the trap of despair and frustration. Optimism is also justified because progress in research, science and knowledge shrinks distances, eliminates obstacles and opens doors and minds in the South as well as in the North. Given that fact, it is natural that people's understanding of each other's problems and concerns should increase and that ultimately a common awareness will develop to enable everyone to face the threats and challenges that await humankind everywhere on this planet.

Mr. Jayanama (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Like poisonous waste from industrial development, the epidemics resulting from underdevelopment and poverty know no borders or obstacles. Drugs would not have spread in some States in the South had it not been for the many traffickers and users in the countries of the North. Neither should we forget that the pollution of the environment in the countries of the North is primarily the result of industrial production of all kinds, both sophisticated and basic, at a time when environmental pollution in the countries of the South is primarily the result of the lack of a minimum of small, basic industries capable of making products to deal with environmental pollution or of employing the means to do so.

In this context, we should like to reaffirm our belief that weakening the economies of the developing countries does not necessarily serve the interests of the economies of developed countries, because it weakens the purchasing power of the former, which, in turn, negatively affects the rates of economic development of the latter. The financial crisis that affected the economies of the countries of South-East Asia two years ago reflected that mutual effect when its repercussions reached Brazil and even some other countries in South America. There must, therefore, be a constructive dialogue between developing and developed countries, a dialogue based on common interests, genuine interrelations and mutual responsibilities aimed at ensuring sustainable development and social justice.

We hope that there will be an end to the contrariety by which the industrial countries demand that developing countries open their markets and borders to their products while the developing countries are finding it difficult to export their goods because of protectionist measures and obstacles, including the prevention of the transfer of technology and the refusal to allow developing countries to integrate such technology into their industrial processes.

If we were to look back at the ethnic and religious wars and conflicts that spread with the end of the cold war and that reached the heart of Africa, Asia and even Europe, we would find it difficult to imagine their repercussions being confined within closed borders. Through succeeding waves of migration, various religions and ethnic groups have become part of the social fabric of most societies in the world, especially in Western countries. The tragedy of such wars and conflicts is therefore a source of concern for most countries of the world, particularly the United States of America, which has the largest number of ethnic and religious groups of any country in recent history. That fact explains the interest the United States takes in regional conflicts, particularly those in the Middle East, which have repercussions at the domestic level in the United States.

Such American interest is commensurate with the varied impact of these conflicts, although one should not disregard the other economic and strategic interests.

The impact of impressive scientific and technological advances in communications and in the flow of information on such events will not be limited to a momentary pinprick of conscience when we see them on our television screens. It could well go beyond this in the future, resulting in concrete action by large groups and could in turn threaten the stability and sovereignty of States, especially those whose populations encompass many ethnic groups and religions.

It is regrettable that these grave challenges and phenomena will be carried over into the next century, perhaps for years or even decades, without a remedy. We are convinced that the best framework for facing up to these challenges and phenomena in a serious and effective manner is a United Nations truly respected by all its Member States, one based on collective action by the States of the North and of the South, all according to their own potential and capacities.

Marginalizing the role of the United Nations, using it only on selected occasions and as a cover for initiatives and decisions adopted outside the Security Council, will serve the interests of no one. The problems and challenges facing mankind are truly grave and dangerous both quantitatively and qualitatively. We believe that no one State, however powerful and wise it is, can meet these universal problems and challenges alone, much less find lasting, solid solutions to them.

Clearly, many are dissatisfied with the use of humanitarian pretexts to launch military intervention outside the framework of the Security Council. It began with the intervention in Somalia in 1992, whose repercussions included the collapse of all State institutions and the carving up of the capital, Mogadishu, among fighting warlords. This trend continued with the intervention in Kosovo, where the fate of the people remains in the balance, although the intervention succeeded in supplying the people with medicine and food.

But here it must be said that illegitimate intervention outside the framework of the Security Council is not as bad as completely ignoring dangerous and bloody crises such as those beyond what might be called the line of death and hunger: a line stretching from the Horn of Africa, in the east, to Angola, in the west, and then to Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo. Many suffering Africans who live along this bleeding line and who lack the most basic necessities may well envy the inhabitants of Kosovo, who at least had food and medicine during their ordeal.

Since the end of the cold war hopes have been pinned on the reform of the United Nations and on an increase in the membership of the Security Council with a view to achieving a more democratic and fairer representation in this international organization. The Non-Aligned Movement has been enthusiastic about this issue and has given it serious consideration at all its conferences. Its member States know full well that they lack influence in the Security Council commensurate with their numbers and reflecting their legitimate concerns. At the same time, Germany and Japan, following major international transformations, have become aware of how important it is for them to become permanent members of the Security Council. Here Italy has played an important role in seeking a third way between the North and the South. No solution has yet emerged that could attract consensus on the subject among members of the United Nations.

The unavoidable question for us all is what has so far been achieved in the process of reforming the Security Council and promoting its role and status. The answer is nothing, except for the marginalization of the role and status of the Security Council and the extension of its activities beyond the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, both when events have required it and, at times, when they have not. It seems that the premeditated marginalization of the role of the Security Council and the fact that the reform process has been almost dormant are being used by some as a pretext for ignoring the Charter and violating the sovereignty of States through the use of regional military organizations as a substitute for the Security Council.

The world today cannot endure a nuclear arms race that threatens the security and the very survival of mankind, particularly in the absence of a just and stable international order. There will be no successful non-proliferation regime without achieving universality for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Syria, the other Arab States and most countries of the world have appealed to the five nuclear States, in the light of the 1995 extension of the NPT, not to exclude any State from acceding to the Treaty, so that the world may be spared another nuclear arms race. A new nuclear arms race has actually taken place in South Asia since the extension of the Treaty. In the Middle East, Israel remains the only State in the region that refuses to

accede to the Treaty and to submit all its nuclear installations to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As the time for the next review of the NPT approaches, Syria renews its call for transforming the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone under United Nations auspices, as a serious contribution to the creation of a propitious climate for the regional peace, security and stability to which we all aspire.

The international community looked to the peace process that began at Madrid in 1991 as the most important, most serious initiative for ending a conflict that has been raging for decades, one that has bled the huge economic and human energies of the peoples of the region. The Madrid framework, the guarantees offered by the United States, the results reached based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, all constituted obligations and commitments accepted by all parties concerned. None of these can now be called into question or circumvented. They all have been duly deposited with the United States Administration, with the agreement of the parties concerned. Hence Syria's call to reaffirm that trust, including complete Israeli withdrawal to the lines of 4 June 1967, and resumption of peace talks with Israel from the point at which they were suspended in order to address pending matters until both sides agree on full peace.

What Syria is calling for cannot be considered a "precondition", as the Israeli government claims: if we were to accept that it was, as the Netanyahu Government also claimed, we would have to conclude that any agreement between negotiators on any single component of any a peace accord would always be considered a "precondition" if any move were made to conclude any other component of a peace accord. And that would invariably take negotiations, back to square one after each step forward, endlessly back and forth.

Also, we draw the Assembly's attention to the falsity of the Israeli claim that Syria wants to get a particular result in the negotiations before they have even started. Needless to say, trust in the United States of America does not, by itself, constitute a peace agreement; rather, it is a fundamental part of an agreement whose remaining elements — normal, peaceful relations and security arrangements based on the purposes and principles laid down under United States auspices and with its participation — still need to be fleshed out.

So we were not surprised, yesterday, by the address of the Foreign Minister of Israel before this Assembly, when — under the flag of peace education — he requested leaders and teachers to stress to their peoples and students the importance of peace, totally ignoring the fact that the Israeli occupation is a major reason for the absence of peace in the region.

Peace education requires first and foremost an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories. Specifically, it must withdraw from the Golan Heights to the 4 June 1967 line; from south Lebanon; from the western Bekaa, and also from Jerusalem, the city of peace. Settlement activities in the occupied territories and the destruction of Arab houses must stop. Last but not least, Israeli words about peace must be translated into deeds, so that students in Israel do not think that peace education means continued occupation by force of other peoples' lands.

During the past few weeks, major efforts have been made by the United States of America, and by the European Union, the Russian Federation and other countries. We hope that these efforts will continue until Israel realizes how fair Syria's position is and how ready Syria is to resume negotiations at the point where they left off. Let us not waste long and arduous years of negotiations: Syria is eager not to miss this opportunity to achieve peace; if it is missed, then Israel alone should take the blame.

Syria reaffirms once more its great concern for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and calls for an end to the suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people. It calls for economic sanctions to be lifted, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. It also calls for no action or measure to be taken outside the United Nations context. At the same time, we ask Iraq to implement the remaining Security Council resolutions in a manner that guarantees a just solution to the problem of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other detainees.

Syria also calls on the Security Council to put an immediate and final end to the sanctions against Libya, as Libya has honoured all its obligations under Security Council resolutions. We would emphasize that we fully support the Libyan requests for the sanctions to be ended. In the light of the fraternal relations which Syria maintains with the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, we call on these two neighbouring countries to hold talks to find a peaceful solution to the dispute over three islands in the Gulf.

The continuing tragic situation in Afghanistan is a source of great concern to us. We are convinced that the Afghan problem can be solved only if the fighting ceases and negotiations are begun on achieving national reconciliation and finding an acceptable and lasting political settlement that results in security and stability for our friends the Afghan people.

Syria expresses its full support for all measures to ensure peace, security and stability on the Korean peninsula. It expresses its support also for the aspirations of the Korean people for national unity achieved by peaceful means and free of foreign intervention.

Syria once again highlights the need to take all necessary steps, at the earliest possible moment, to end the economic, trade and financial embargo on Cuba imposed by the United States of America for almost four decades. We support Cuba's call for differences between the two countries to be resolved through dialogue and on a basis of equality, mutual respect and good- neighbourly relations.

As we bid farewell to the twentieth century, the human race is still yearning for a world free of war, injustice, ignorance and poverty, a world governed by international relations based on cooperation, mutual respect, greater justice and true equity. Those are the yearnings which the peoples of the world hope to see realized next century so that coming generations are guaranteed a better life and a more prosperous and humane future.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Hong Soon-young.

Mr. Hong (Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, I offer Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I also pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, under whose leadership the Assembly succeeded in achieving positive results at its fifty-third session.

I have every expectation that this, the final session of the Assembly of the twentieth century, will be as fruitful. The rich experience and leadership Mr. Gurirab brings to the presidency ensure the session's success. I assure him of our full cooperation and support in his noble endeavours.

I warmly congratulate the three new Members, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, on their admission to the United Nations.

The new millennium is about to dawn, and we will enter it with great hope for the new age, but also burdened by numerous problems left unresolved from the passing century. To realize the hope and mould the twenty-first century into an era of global peace and stability, of well-being and prosperity for all humankind, we must face up to these problems, decide what our priority goals are and seek measures to achieve them. So that the fifty-fourth session may illuminate the way, let us gather the best of our collective wisdom.

The defining character of our times is change and the acceleration of change. The guiding precept of the global actors is shifting from nationalism to internationalism, and further to globalism. The whole world is converging around shared values and behaviour patterns. In economic affairs, the market economy is becoming the global norm. In political matters, reconciliation and cooperation have become the expected mode of behaviour. The world is becoming a global village of countries willing and eager to live with one another in interdependence and integration.

A conspicuous exception to the tide of the times is the Korean peninsula, where the confrontational structure of the cold-war era still keeps the two divided sides in mutual distrust and hostility. Decades have passed since the end of the Korean war, but genuine peace has yet to come to the Korean people. Despite the warm wind of reconciliation blowing around the world, the Korean peninsula has remained frozen in an icy time warp.

The Republic of Korea aspires to melt away the ice and reconcile with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It aspires to free the Korean peninsula from the final legacy of the cold war and allow it to take its rightful place in the grand march of history towards the new era. To realize this aspiration, the engagement policy of the Government of President Kim Dae-jung has been sending warm winds of sunshine to the North, in hopes that it will respond in kind. Inspired by the lessons of history and the trend of the times, this sunshine policy represents a bold shift in our thinking about South-North relations.

Our engagement policy is not aimed at undermining or absorbing the North. Instead, it is a policy of cooperation, designed to help North Korea overcome its economic difficulties and promote the co-prosperity of all

Koreans, so that we may finally be free from the threat of another war. It is a policy of tolerance, envisioning the peaceful coexistence of two systems along the road to eventual unification.

The steady and consistent implementation of the engagement policy during the past year and a half has made meaningful and unprecedented openings in the thick wall that divides South and North Korea. South Korean businesses are investing in the North. In one such venture, over 100,000 South Korean tourists were able to visit a scenic mountain in the North for the first time since the national division.

Economic cooperation is also an important element in the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, a joint endeavour of the Republic of Korea, the United States, Japan, the European Union and many other countries to help resolve North Korea's energy-shortage problem while keeping it free of nuclear weapons. The engagement policy is being carried out in close consultation with the United States and Japan. It also has the full support of our neighbours in North-East Asia — China, the Russian Federation and Mongolia — as well as the G-7, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the European Union and other members of the international community. South Korea is deeply grateful for their understanding and support.

Still North Korea remains suspicious of our intentions. It may perceive the engagement policy as a strategy to bring about its downfall or to absorb it. Speaking in this solemn Hall, I must reiterate the genuine, good-hearted intentions of the engagement policy. The Republic of Korea has no wish to undermine North Korea or to make it a part of us. All we seek is peaceful coexistence.

I make this appeal. Let us, South and North Korea, live in lasting peace. Let us together join the mainstream of history: reconciliation, cooperation and interdependence. I sincerely hope that North Korea responds to the warm sunshine we have been sending it with some warm sunshine of its own.

I also hope that the North Korean authorities will take steps to fundamentally address the chronic food shortage and other difficulties that have plagued the people in the North for many years. The problems require the continued interest and assistance of the international community. Countless children in the North are suffering and dying from starvation and malnutrition, stunted growth and disease. With their right to food and life irrevocably impaired, tens of thousands of North Koreans have fled the country in search of food.

The primary responsibility for redressing the situation lies with the North Korean authorities. They must face up to the enormity of the problems. We also hope that the international community will provide continued humanitarian assistance to North Korea.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has actively taken part in the humanitarian efforts to help the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are prepared to offer far more in terms of food and fertilizer, as well as assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's agricultural restructuring. We urge the North Korean authorities to join us in dialogue for cooperation on this and other matters.

North-East Asia, where the interests of the major Powers intersect, is an economic powerhouse and a region vital to global peace and stability. With the market economy taking root throughout the region, a new age of stability, cooperation and mutual prosperity is sprouting in North-East Asia. The countries of the region are becoming bound ever closer together in economic ties and interdependencies. Unhampered exchanges and cooperation are expanding far beyond the trade in goods and services to people-to-people contacts and other interactions in the fields of culture, sports, education and many others. Mutual understanding and appreciation is deepening.

To further the trend, North-East Asia requires adequate mechanisms to deal with transnational issues, such as environmental pollution, drug-trafficking, refugees, organized crime and public health. There is also a need for a region-wide channel of dialogue and cooperation to defuse tension and prevent conflict.

To enjoy a stable security environment and co-prosperity in the twenty-first century, the countries of North-East Asia must learn from the lessons of region-wide cooperation and integration in many other areas of the world. They must strengthen mutual trust by upgrading the mode and calibre of their dialogue and consultations. They should promptly set out to establish a dialogue forum where they can all engage in earnest exchanges of views and nurture the sense of community.

The Republic of Korea stands ready to cooperate closely with the other countries of the region to launch such a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation

encompassing all of North-East Asia. I urge the countries of the region to join in the efforts to translate this idea into reality.

Peace and co-prosperity in North-East Asia will certainly gain from the global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, in which the Republic of Korea has been an active participant. With the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), my country is now a party to all the key non-proliferation treaties. We call upon other countries that have yet to sign and ratify the CTBT to promptly do so, so that the Treaty can soon go into effect. We call upon all States to join in the non-proliferation efforts by acceding to all global regimes, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, aimed at combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

A priority task for the global community will be to successfully carry out the review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) slated for next year and to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. I urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as a party to the NPT, to fulfil its responsibilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement and to cooperate with us to implement the 1991 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We are living in a single global community. Globalization has been good to the Republic of Korea. Without the open markets, interdependencies and instant information flow nurtured by globalization, we would not have been able to achieve the rapid economic development that we did. However, stuck in the expediencies fostered during the years of Government-driven quantitative growth, Korea neglected to strengthen the market rules in the national economy. We failed to realize that globalization requires constant efforts to reinforce the market rules — transparency, accountability, efficiency and productivity. As a result, Korea was struck by a severe economic crisis in 1997.

But now we are trying to make up for past neglect. During the past year and a half, we have been undertaking sweeping and intense reforms in the key sectors of society. The reforms have required painful restructuring and sacrifices, but we have been steady and firm in putting into practice the belief that trade and investment liberalization and the strengthening of market rules are the keys to sustained economic growth and prosperity.

A year ago, from this same rostrum, I spoke about the efforts of my Government and people to overcome the crisis, guided by the conviction in the parallel development of democracy and the free-market economy. Today, I am happy to report that the efforts have begun to pay off and the country is expected to achieve over 6 per cent economic growth this year, a dramatic turnaround from the -5.8 percent of last year. Other economic indicators also speak of a stable, recovering economy.

Korea has learned valuable lessons from the economic crisis. We are now keenly aware that free and fair competition and good governance are essential to sustainable economic development. We also realized that a system of social welfare based on human-resources development must be established to mitigate the painful consequences of the reforms. Applying those lessons in the reform drive, we are on our way to becoming a market economy with a human face.

Of course, in a globalized economy, crisis knows no borders and the efforts at preventing and coping with crisis must also extend beyond borders. In this regard, we welcome the discussions concerning the restructuring of the global financial architecture. For the discussions to be productive, the crisis-stricken countries and other emerging market economies should have extensive participation. Keeping track of the discussions for meaningful progress, we count on the continued cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods systems.

One consequence of globalization has been the widening gap between the developed and the developing countries and the increasing marginalization of the least developed ones. Unattended, the disparity will only grow in the twenty-first century of unlimited competition, becoming a risk factor that could endanger global stability and peace. There is a pressing need for a new paradigm of international development cooperation, whereby the chronic poverty and excessive debts besetting the developing countries and other related issues are taken as challenges to be overcome with the active input of all members of the global community.

Development is meaningless without a healthy population to reap the fruits. Thus, we welcome the joint initiative of the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization to establish the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and the Children's Vaccine Initiative. Doing its share in the

efforts to save the 9 million children of the world who are dying every year from diseases that can be prevented, the Republic of Korea has hosted the International Vaccine Institute since 1994. We hope the Institute will be able to work in close cooperation with the Global Alliance and the Vaccine Initiative.

In the half century since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, the United Nations has taken the lead in forging global mechanisms for the protection and advancement of human rights around the world. The principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights are now widely upheld. Human rights violations, wherever they may take place, are now considered a legitimate concern of the international community. Human rights has become a priority agenda of the post-cold-war global community. In the Republic of Korea, the Government of President Kim Dae Jung has made significant advances in the field of human rights. We have also been an active participant in the efforts of the United Nations and the global community to resolve concrete cases of human rights violations.

While we note the advances in human rights, we must not forget that a quarter of the world's population still struggles to survive in abject poverty. Poverty undermines human dignity and human rights. Poverty is fertile ground for conflict and dictatorship. Poverty alleviation should be incorporated as a key goal in the United Nations endeavours to advance human rights around the world. We wish to see the mainstreaming of human rights in all the programmes and activities of the United Nations further expanded and deepened. Furthermore, we believe this global body should strengthen its capacity for early warning and preventive action so as to forestall massive human rights violations and the outflow of refugees.

The task of advancing human rights has always benefited from the push and pull of civil society. It will be even more so in the new century as Governments and the United Nations work in closer alliance and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, research organizations and advocacy groups. Next month, some 3,000 non-governmental organization representatives will gather in Seoul to take part in the 1999 international conference of non-governmental organizations. Exploring the role of the non-governmental organizations in the twenty-first century global community, the meeting from October 11 to 15 should bring the United Nations system and civil society closer together.

Let us turn our attention to the situation in East Timor. The Republic of Korea applauded the Government of Indonesia for making the decision to let the people of East Timor choose their own fate. The will of the people, as unequivocally registered on 30 August, must be upheld. The violent repression of that will is a grave challenge to the basic principle of democracy and human decency. The atrocity must not be left unpunished and law and order must be restored in East Timor. The Indonesian Government has again shown wisdom and courage in accepting the multinational peacekeeping forces under the auspices of the United Nations. We hope that peace is soon returned and that the will of the people for independence is fully implemented through the conjoined efforts of the Indonesian Government and the United Nations. The Republic of Korea will take part in the peacekeeping operations and will continue to do its share in the efforts to safeguard regional and global peace and stability.

The United Nations has much work to do in the twenty-first century. The Republic of Korea deeply appreciates the reforms introduced by the Secretary-General to enhance the responsiveness of the global body to new challenges. We welcome the designation of the fifty-fifth session next year as the Millennium Assembly to identify the challenges awaiting the global community in the twenty-first century. We hope the Millennium Assembly strengthens the global leadership of the United Nations for the new age.

In this regard, such thought-provoking concepts as global public goods, human security and global governance may serve to frame the discussions at the Millennium Assembly.

I look to the twenty-first century as the era of the United Nations. I sincerely hope to see the global body renew itself and fulfil its missions through continuous reforms and to enhance its effectiveness and democratic character. Recalling the lofty spirit that gave birth to the United Nations half a century ago, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, I pledge our abiding support for the global body in its noble mission for peace and prosperity around the world.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Ortíz.

Mr. Ortíz (Ecuador)(*spoke in Spanish*): I take great pleasure in congratulating the President on his well-

deserved election, which honours him personally and his great country, Namibia. On behalf of the Ecuadorian Government and on my own behalf, allow me to greet him most cordially and wish him every measure of success.

I warmly welcome the three new members of this Organization, Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga, and congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the intelligent way with which he conducted the work of the previous session of the General Assembly.

The border conflict between Ecuador and Peru that had prevailed since the very foundation of our republics, during the first part of the last century, was concluded on 26 October 1998 by means of a negotiation process begun in February 1995. This historic event, reached by the signing of the peace agreement in Brasilia, allowed the two countries to change their relations entirely and to transform the conflict into peace and, now, to transform peace into development.

Immediately upon the signing of the peace agreement, Mr. Jamil Mahuad, President of the Republic of Ecuador, put an end to the acquisition of war materials, reduced mandatory military service and, in close collaboration with Ecuadorian soldiers, reoriented the action of the armed forces toward tasks linked to development and internal security.

The comprehensive peace formula, reached with the assistance of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, included not only the delimitation of the border, but also a treaty on navigation and trade, a broad-ranging agreement on the integration of borders and the establishment of a commission on building trust and security, among several other peace measures.

In accordance with the agreement, Ecuador and Peru have established an institutional structure that is now fully operational in order to attain the goals of an ambitious programme that includes the construction of five bi-national roads, joint development of our river basins, the building of physical infrastructure and the achievement of a human development programme designed to improve the living standards of the residents along our borders, who during so many decades of stagnation in their territories were victims, paralysed by fear and uncertainty.

To reach this goal, we have combined our efforts, convinced, at the same time, that we will be able to count on international cooperation. We hope that the border between Ecuador and Peru will serve as an example of the fruits of peace for the world. We want to see highways instead of trenches, irrigation canals instead of fortifications, hospitals instead of combat airplanes and electric plants instead of missiles and anti-personal mines.

In the name of Ecuador, I call upon the international community, on each one of the member countries, on financial and development cooperation organizations and on non-governmental organizations to contribute their aid, small or large, to this new peaceful and friendly space our two Latin American nations have built.

Having resolved its long-standing border dispute, Ecuador reiterates its traditional commitment to continue a permanent search for mutual agreements through the peaceful settlement of disputes and its firm decision not to become involved in any international war conflict. Within the framework of these principles, Ecuador recognizes the gravity of the armed confrontation that is searing its neighbour the Republic of Colombia, but considers that fight to be of an internal nature. Hence, it fully supports the efforts of the Government of President Andrés Pastrana to reach peace by negotiating with the rebel groups in that country. In that regard, any intention to internationalize an armed conflict whose solution concerns only the people of Colombia could be counter-productive and dangerous.

The struggle for development and the efforts to combat poverty undertaken by Ecuador during the past year have been severely affected by multiple crises in the international arena and by natural disasters that strongly hit many places of the world, and Ecuador in particular. The violence of climatic phenomena makes it imperative to urgently implement a strategy for international cooperation to prevent the disastrous consequences of those natural disasters on the population, the economy and the environment. With the support of the United Nations, Ecuador has proposed the creation of an international research centre on the El Niño phenomenon that would contribute to improving the world capacity for prediction and early warning and to facilitate the adoption of protective and precautionary measures to mitigate the effects of the phenomenon.

The aftermath of the El Niño phenomenon cost the equivalent of one half of our annual export revenues. In addition, the severe impact of the sharp price deterioration of our main export products, particularly oil, has caused economic stagnation, the closure of production units and the rise of unemployment. The crisis in the financial markets of Asia and Latin America has

also spread its negative effects over our country, while the prosperity of other, developed areas did little to mitigate the effects of that crisis. Within that context of great difficulties, the conditions under which Ecuador renegotiated its foreign debt became extremely difficult to comply with. On 28 August 1999, the national Government used the legal mechanism of deferring for one month the payment of its Brady bonds debt service and at this time it is preparing to commence a process of restructuring these obligations that will enable it to share in a more equitable way the debt load among all the actors of this financial relationship.

In 1999, poverty affects 61.3 per cent of the Ecuadorian population. Last June the unemployment rate was 15.6 per cent. Four out of ten Ecuadorians have a daily income of less than $2, and two out of ten earn less than $1 per day. Global malnutrition affects more than 40 per cent of the children; one out of three do not complete the sixth grade, and 40 per cent of all children and adolescents are school drop-outs. These imbalances break social cohesion, limit the possibilities for the exercise of an effective democracy and reduce the validity of citizens' rights. The economic readjustment measures that the Government of Ecuador intends to apply will necessarily be conditioned by social development objectives, such as the reduction of poverty and malnutrition, the improvement of health indexes, the increase of access to better education, the reduction of unemployment and the increase of family income.

Ecuador strongly believes that market mechanisms stimulate competitiveness and efficiency, but also that the institutional framework within which these processes take place must be capable of correcting distortions, putting limits on financial speculation and contributing to putting in place more stable and predictable systems of pricing, so that the living conditions of millions upon millions of human beings are not put at risk, and the stability and longevity of democratic regimes are not threatened by social discontent and economic crises.

In Ecuador, President Jamil Mahuad and his Government have maintained democracy with a strong grip despite difficult circumstances. Social discontent from the contraction in output, natural disasters, the financial crisis, the drop in international prices for raw materials and commodities caused an increase in poverty and unleashed extensive manifestations of social discord.

In facing situations such as these, we need to have an institutional economic order that gives a way out, particularly for countries with small economies, which are the most vulnerable to and most likely to be affected by extreme economic crises.

On the eve of a new millennium, humankind is developing one scenario alone, a scenario not only of interdependence but also of globalization. In this global environment, all countries are involved in huge processes of market integration, liberalization of trade barriers, standardization of norms and adaptation and establishment of institutions so that they can cope.

Nevertheless, globalization has so far not generated an equal distribution of prosperity, scientific progress, human health or cultural benefits. Right now, more than ever, when humankind is a single whole, we must establish shared ways to preserve, first and foremost, human dignity and well-being, the basic requirements of the human being, which are based on security and human development.

One example of the effects of human insecurity are the great migratory waves that we are presently witnessing. Ecuador calls upon the General Assembly to orient cooperation strategies in terms of the human security perspective in dealing with shifts in human population that demand a better distribution of prosperity far from the extremes of opulence and destitution. Ecuador eagerly welcomes the new focus on providing a model for international policy including the notion of human security, especially at a time when the scourge of violence, drug trafficking, terrorism and environmental deterioration have become more acute and when we have witnessed armed conflicts around the world during the past year.

Combating transnational crime is a shared endeavour for all civilized peoples. In particular, controlling the traffic in drugs and illicit drug consumption warrants coordinated, universal action. Ecuador has made its contribution and is prepared to continue making its contribution towards this end. It has therefore acceded to many international treaties and undertaken many international obligations, which it has fulfilled faithfully.

Our country is looking forward to the Millennium Summit with great anticipation. The summit will be a historic opportunity for the community of nations at a time when the challenges of the twenty-first century oblige us to define and to affirm a common commitment

to a universal project of understanding and cooperation that will inspire the United Nations in the coming century.

The Millennium Round negotiations of the World Trade Organization, and other continental and regional rounds, should be processes that open up to the opportunities and challenges for creativity and effort and enable us to narrow the gap between the prosperity of just a few countries and the poverty of the great majority.

Ecuador firmly believes in open markets, economic integration, foreign investment and strengthening the multilateral trading system. For this reason it has worked within the Andean Community on improving relationships with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the European Union on negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and on its growing links with the Pacific basin, but it believes also that these processes must not ignore the individual features of the smaller countries and must strike a balance that will enable them to achieve, soon, an international system that is equitable and based on solidarity.

Ecuador was the second country in Latin America to promulgate a national human rights plan, and it did so from a broad-based and democratic perspective. The plan was conceived and prepared on the basis of a consultation process in which civil society and the State participated fully. This fact has earned special recognition from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which described the Ecuadorian plan as a model for other countries.

Our country gives national priority to the project entitled "Towards a culture of peace". In this context, under a presidential initiative, Ecuador is promoting wide-ranging activities linked to international efforts in accordance with the United Nations culture of peace project and the proclamation of the Year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

Over the past year the international community has witnessed an aggravation of regional conflicts: war has left deep scars in various parts of the world. In this context, the United Nations has had to play a special role in resolving international conflicts, and its concerted and decisive action has enabled it to resolve some of them successfully. Nevertheless, strengthening our world Organization's activities in this field must be carried out in such a way that all measures taken under the Charter follow its principles faithfully so that the United Nations keeps the necessary international credibility and continues to be the legitimate mouthpiece and manager for collective action to maintain international peace and security.

As a party to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, and given that it has been directly affected by the problem of anti-personnel mines, the elimination of these weapons of war is of particular interest for Ecuador. Since the signing of the peace agreement with Peru, our two countries have begun removing and destroying the mines along the border. We are sure that the international community will continue to offer its cooperation in carrying out our two countries' demining programme. On behalf of Ecuador, I thank the States and organizations that have contributed or pledged to contribute to this cause.

In the light of the realities of the situation facing humankind, Ecuador reaffirms its unwavering support for the multilateral system and, consequently, for the United Nations which, since its creation, has been the universal meeting place of all nations to work for the ideals and goals shared by all peoples inspired by the purposes and principles of the Organization. Ecuador draws its inspiration from the ideal of achieving a world of peace and freedom, of social justice and development, of fruitful coexistence of peoples and nations, a world in which Governments work together to solve the complex problems besetting humankind.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Her Excellency the Honourable Billie Miller.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. The Barbados delegation shares the confidence expressed in his leadership and offers its full cooperation as he presides over our deliberations.

Let me also warmly commend his predecessor, my friend and colleague, Mr. Didier Opertti, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, for his outstanding stewardship of the Assembly during the last year and for the vision and direction he gave to the ongoing work of the United Nations.

We are delighted to welcome to our family of nations Tonga, Kiribati and Nauru, which are, like

Barbados, small island developing States and members of the Commonwealth and also of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. We have long enjoyed good relations with our sister Pacific islands and wish to assure the new Member States of our continued friendship and solidarity.

As we reflect on the twentieth century, we see a period remarkable for its contradictions. We see, on the one hand, astounding developments in many fields of human endeavour and, on the other, national and international conflicts, resulting in mass destruction of human life and infrastructure as well as the almost irreversible compromising of the ecological system. It is evident that if as nations we refuse to use our accumulated knowledge and experience, these contradictions will be carried well into the twenty-first century, making it even more difficult for us to face and overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

One of the most serious of these challenges is that of the concept of globalization. The proponents of this ideology, which embraces trade liberalization and global governance, wish us to believe that it is a natural and logical development in international relations. It is not. In many of its important aspects it is an imposition. One has only to examine the bases of the clamour for trade liberalization to become aware of this.

Trade liberalization assumes that small States compete with larger, stronger, more experienced countries on the same terms, or become mere satellites in a neo-colonial sphere. No nation, large or small, would willingly accept a satellite role. The international community must therefore come to recognize that within the context of trade liberalization free trade must import fair trade: trade in goods and services that have been produced and supplied under conditions respectful of the rights and dignity of the labour force; respectful of the preservation of the environment, and guaranteeing fair prices that provide returns to the supplier.

Barbados and the Caribbean are confronting serious challenges in the effort to remain viable economies as traditional systems of cooperation between individual States and groups of nations are supplanted by the modern concepts of supranational interests and of globalization. To fully grasp the enormity of the adjustment process now facing Caribbean economies one must first appreciate that the Caribbean is perhaps the region which under the original post-colonial regime enjoyed the highest level of trade preferences with Europe.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has evolved as the dominant forum for the reform of the world trading system, but it is now evident that more democratic, participatory and transparent systems are needed to protect the interests of the smaller and more vulnerable members of that Organization. For surely the WTO cannot be meant to operate as a weapon of oppression in a new millennium. Surely it cannot be acceptable in a just world that the new trade ethic should derive solely from the rigid application of technical rules.

Our new system is clearly seriously flawed when a dispute between two powerful transatlantic partners can be settled in a political vacuum which totally ignores the very real and disastrous consequences it will inevitably unleash on the economies of a fragile group of small States. This is certainly not globalization with a human face.

And so it must be appreciated that the interdependence associated with globalization is a two-sided coin. Just as it is claimed that the benefits of free trade will be enjoyed by all, so too will we all suffer from the repercussions of failed economies, unable to cope with the impact of global trade liberalization.

In the Caribbean region, we are haunted by the prospect of failed societies. Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados is particularly concerned, and has repeatedly warned of this possibility. Recently he made the following observation:

> "The economic decay in some economies has been so severe and corrosive as to set in train social and political disorder which, unchecked, will create a new Caribbean species of 'failed society'."

Indeed, we have already seen how the dislocation of some States, whether large, or small and marginalized, can impact negatively on the world's most developed economies. When the global system economically disenfranchises large numbers of the world's population, we should not be surprised that their hopeless circumstances might propel them towards the underworld of transnational crime.

The unique nature and scope of vulnerabilities of small economies cannot be disputed. Barbados strongly reiterates the call for the recognition and adoption of vulnerability indices to assist in determining access to development financing.

The United Nations has a critical role to play as the defender of the right of all States, regardless of size or influence, to voice their concerns. As a forum for constructive consensus-building in an atmosphere of free and open dialogue the United Nations is even more relevant in an era characterized by complex negotiations and supranational interests dominated by a powerful few.

As a community of nations we have one common factor that unquestionably unites us all. We share one Earth. The need to sustain the Earth's oceans, seas and the environment in general is undeniable. Indeed, this represents one of the greatest challenges to globalization. As a small island developing State, Barbados has nurtured a strong commitment to the implementation of practices that seek to ensure sustainable development in all aspects of our lives.

The dedication of Barbados to the promotion of global sustainable development has been affirmed by our active participation in numerous international negotiations devoted to these issues. It is also demonstrated by our vigorous efforts to foster a shared vision to reverse the conventional wisdom of the past, which sacrificed environmental concerns in blind pursuit of that other ideology of economic growth. That shared vision will be as relevant in the new century as it was when the international community assembled in Barbados in 1994 for the first United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Barbados is proud, as is the entire region, of the progress made by the small island developing States in fulfilling their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. At the national level, our Government has successfully forged greater links with civil society, including the private sector and labour, in the preparation of our environmental policies and action plans.

The just-concluded special session to review and appraise the Barbados Programme of Action drew attention once more to the serious way in which the small island developing States have accepted their responsibility to integrate sustainable development practices into all aspects of their economic and social activity. We trust that the outcomes of this review will be fully implemented by the international community.

The Caribbean Basin States will shortly be addressing in this forum their interest in working towards the international designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. While we acknowledge that there is work still to be done to fully develop and implement this concept, we are also firmly convinced of the validity of our efforts, which we believe will ultimately lead to an integrated approach to the sustainable management of the Caribbean Sea and to the protection of its resources.

Significant progress has been achieved over the last decade to bring peace and stability to the hemisphere of the Americas. Barbados subscribes to the philosophy of inclusion and constructive engagement and strongly believes that these must be our guiding principles as we strive to banish the last vestiges of the cold war from our region. Like other countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we have developed a productive and cooperative relationship with our neighbour Cuba. We are convinced that Cuba has a significant role to play in our region, and we view its reintegration into hemispheric affairs as an urgent necessity. The continuation of the unilateral economic embargo against Cuba runs contrary to that spirit and is out of tune with the significant efforts of engagement being practiced by the remaining Governments of this hemisphere. We urge the suspension of this anachronistic measure.

The world still awaits the peace that was promised when the Charter of the United Nations was adopted, and that was confidently reproclaimed at the end of the cold war. As a small democratic State, Barbados is ever-conscious of the peaceful climate which it has enjoyed since independence, in 1966. The political stability of Barbados and the Caribbean region, which has facilitated and fostered economic and political development, must never be taken for granted. It is a therefore a source of great distress to all peace-loving people that despite all the wonderful technological and scientific advances we have made over the centuries of this millennium, we are entering into the third millennium still carrying the baggage of ancient ethnic and tribal conflicts and of nationalistic rivalries. Today, crises that threaten the very existence of some States remain of deep concern to the international community.

Barbados shares the profound anguish and suffering of the people of Kosovo and was appalled by the barbaric slaughter and the massive displacement of innocent people and the destabilizing effect this has had on neighbouring States. We support the role that the peacekeeping forces are playing in restoring order to Kosovo and providing the conditions for the return of the displaced population to their homes.

We wish to reiterate, together with the members of the Caribbean Community, that military intervention should be authorized by the United Nations Security Council. As a small, defenceless State, we are uncomfortable with the notion that intervention can take place without the prior authorization of the United Nations Security Council.

We welcome the restoration of democracy and the return of civilian government to Nigeria and look forward to its renewed participation in the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government conference.

We hope that concerted action will continue among the parties involved to implement the Lomé Agreement and to bring a final peace to the suffering people of Sierra Leone.

We are also heartened by the decision to mobilize a United Nations peacekeeping force into East Timor to end the abominable infringement of the basic human and civil rights of the people of that country. It is intolerable that in this so-called civilized age people can still find themselves persecuted and terrorized because they vote according to their conscience and in keeping with their vision of their own future.

We are following what is taking place in the Middle East and hope that the conditions now exist to resolve all outstanding issues and so bring about a lasting peace throughout that region.

The multifaceted areas of the sustainable development process demand a holistic approach. No longer can we service only the economy, the agricultural sector or any one sector at the expense of others. The value of building strong social institutions becomes more relevant when placed against the backdrop of globalization and its effects. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that social rights are safeguarded.

Barbados places strong emphasis on social development. We are convinced that more needs to be done at the international level to ensure that this emphasis is maintained. It must be understood that economic development cannot be sustained unless a framework for overall development is in place. The alleviation of poverty and the promotion of gender equality, democracy and the rights of the child are issues that must be simultaneously addressed.

The first World Summit for Social Development, which was held in 1995, gave an international focus to issues such as poverty eradication, full employment, social integration, gender equality and universal access to education. Barbados remains committed to the maintenance of a sustainable economic, political and social environment that will enable its citizens to achieve advanced social development. In furtherance of this objective, the Government of Barbados has created a Ministry of Social Transformation that will be the main focal point for all social and welfare services, with emphasis on poverty alleviation — indeed, eradication — and support for the disadvantaged and the disabled.

At the international level, Barbados welcomes and supports the special session that will take place during the next year. This will provide an opportunity to review the actions that have been taken to give effect to the decisions adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. It is anticipated that this special session will lead to a renewal of international commitment to fulfil the objectives of the 1995 Copenhagen Summit. The matter takes on greater urgency when it is realized that, four years after the United Nations Summit, international and economic crises have led to a reversal of the gains made in social development.

One of the main deterrents to sustainable development remains the illicit traffic in narcotics, which is a major concern to the Governments of the Americas. This transnational phenomenon is one of the more adverse consequences of globalization, which has brought in its wake the associated evils of money laundering, arms trafficking and violent crime. Geography places the Caribbean in the direct path of this phenomenon as a transit point of illegal drugs. It must be borne in mind that the illegal drug trade undermines democracy and can eventually lead to the destruction of the nation-State. This circumstance has compelled the Caribbean countries to give the highest priority to the development of cooperative efforts at drug interdiction, demand-reduction and the containment of transnational crime.

Barbados currently serves as a focal point in these regional efforts, which enjoy the support of the European Union, the United States of America, Canada and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. We will continue to play an active role in support of all coordinated efforts at the regional and international levels to combat the narco-trafficking threat and the dangers posed to the security of the small States of the Caribbean.

Barbados is firmly committed to the United Nations Organization. We have supported all constructive efforts at reform, but we insist that the Organization can remain viable only if all Members scrupulously honour their financial commitments. We also believe that a healthy balance must be maintained between the United Nations peacekeeping focus and its developmental mandate. In this regard, we continue to be concerned at the declining funding available to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies, resulting in a diminished capacity on their part to carry out their important mandate. We reiterate the importance of the work of these agencies in support of the national efforts of developing countries to achieve economic and social progress.

We very much value the work of UNDP and of the United Nations system as a whole. As a net contributing country, Barbados is eager to enter into a new partnership with UNDP that can make a significant contribution to our efforts to achieve the next critical phase of our development, the transition to a globalized economy.

In appreciation of the United Nations contribution over the years, the Government of Barbados has agreed to construct a permanent home for all United Nations offices located in Bridgetown and servicing the Eastern Caribbean. To this end, we expect to commence shortly the construction of the United Nations common premises in Bridgetown.

The new millennium brings with it a sense of giddy expectation, a passion for renewal and the tendency to believe that things will miraculously change for the better overnight. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that the fifty-fifth, the fifty-sixth or even the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will take place in an environment any less complex and challenging than our gathering here today. What we do know is that we may not be expected to complete the task, but then, neither are we at liberty to abstain from it.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.19

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

19th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 September 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Mozambique, His Excellency Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chissano: On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, most sincerely on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Your election to this high office is a matter of honour to all Africans and to the United Nations family, for you represent a nation whose plight remained on the agenda of this Organization for many years. The attainment of the independence of Namibia, the last stronghold of colonialism in the African continent, and the subsequent political, economic and social developments that have occurred in the last few years, have indeed paved the way for the consolidation of the process of political integration of southern Africa. We wish you well in your new responsibilities, and are confident that this body will be well served in the months ahead. We shall cooperate with you in every way we can.

A well-deserved tribute is also due to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the exemplary manner in which he spearheaded the proceedings of the Organization during the last session.

I would also like to express my high regard to the Secretary-General for his continued commitment to international peace and security and for his leadership in dealing with an ever-increasing array of challenges worldwide. I wish to encourage him to continue on this positive path.

My Government welcomes the recent admission to the membership of the United Nations of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. We are certain that the new Members will further enhance the universal nature of our Organization.

I have come to the General Assembly first as a messenger of a people — the Mozambican people — who have embarked on a long process of political, economic and social stabilization, following years of instability. The process of consolidating Mozambique's young, multiparty democracy is making steady progress. Step by step, our country is returning to normalcy, though we are conscious of the hurdles still ahead.

99-85992 (E)

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We are currently preparing for the second multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections, to be held on 3 and 4 December 1999. Periodic genuine elections constitute an important political exercise, which my Government and I are committed to pursuing vigorously with a view to ensuring lasting peace and stability in Mozambique.

In the past five years of pluralistic democracy we have registered important advances in the consolidation of nation-building through collective efforts involving all layers of society. Taking advantage of its diversity and vitality, our Parliament has held fruitful discussion, which resulted in the adoption of new laws that are contributing positively to the revitalization of political, economic and social institutions as well as to the consolidation of peace and democracy.

More important, this forum has contributed to the creation among parliamentarians of a new vision and understanding of the facts about our country and a vision of a united nation pursuing peace, progress and prosperity for all Mozambicans, thus consolidating national reconciliation. The period under review has equally witnessed significant economic and social progress. We are proud that this has been highlighted and commended by well-advised outside observers and by many of the most respected organizations and institutions as a good example of commitment to implement economic reforms.

The Mozambican economy has grown at encouraging rates, resulting in the allocation of an increased share of the national budget to the social sectors. The whole network of schools and health facilities destroyed during the years of destabilization has been rebuilt, and most roads and bridges are under rehabilitation.

My Government has succeeded in creating a more enabling environment for private investment by redefining its role as facilitator. We have identified and established special incentive schemes in various areas with higher potential for development. These incentives are aimed at bringing new investments to a number of areas in order to develop internationally competitive economic zones, create employment opportunities and promote sustainable economic growth. They are also intended to bring about balanced development of the whole country, bearing in mind that some areas were neglected during colonial times.

The streamlining of investment procedures, coupled with political stability, has contributed to the attraction of large investments such as the Maputo Development Corridor project. The concept of development corridors is an initiative regarded as the cornerstone of the regional integration strategy involving the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Other transfrontier and national programmes in partnership with other countries of the region play a major role in this process. These include strategic projects such as the $1.3-billion Mozal aluminium smelter plant to be completed within one year and the projected $2-billion Maputo iron and steel plant; both are part of the Maputo Development Corridor project. The construction of another $600-million iron and steel plant and the construction of a new port in Savane are envisaged as part of the Beira Corridor. Gas projects in the southern and central regions of Mozambique, as well as sugar plants and tourism, are other undertakings of great importance being developed in Mozambique with the participation of other SADC countries.

The ambitious plan for the development of integrated programmes and projects in the Zambezi river basin, an extensive and potentially rich part of Mozambique, include the construction of a big hydroelectric dam at M'panda M'kua. The Zambezi valley covers more than 200,000 square kilometres, nearly one third of our national territory, and is endowed with a variety of resources of strategic importance, which we intend to develop in order to bring about sustainable development for our country and for the SADC region. The Cabora Bassa dam is already supplying electricity to Zimbabwe and to South Africa.

Mozambique will thus be in a position to use its geostrategic location to make a greater contribution towards the integrated development of the southern African region; this is one of the building blocks of continental integration.

We believe that cooperative interaction involving various segments of society, including the private sector, is the key to the promotion of sustainable development through a smart partnership in which all stakeholders will benefit.

I come to this Assembly also as a messenger of the peoples of southern Africa, a region striving to develop as a community of nations and peoples at peace with itself and with others and working towards balanced and integrated development. Last month, the people and the Government of Mozambique were honoured to host the nineteenth Summit of Heads of State or Government of our community, the Southern African Development Community. The Maputo Summit was held on the theme

"SADC in the next millennium: working together for peace, progress and prosperity". It brought together heads of State or Government and other high-ranking representatives of all its 14 member States and, as guests, the heads of State of Nigeria, Uganda and Rwanda, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, as well as other dignitaries representing a variety of other regional and international organizations.

In reviewing the progress made over the previous 12 months, the Summit noted with satisfaction that the economies of the Community continued to grow at in average rate of 3 per cent, thanks to sound macroeconomic policies implemented by member States and to the harmonization and coordination of activities towards economic integration. However, in order to eradicate poverty, the region needs to grow at an average rate of 6 per cent per year. To achieve this objective we need to mobilize more regional resources as well as to consolidate an enabling environment to increase the share of foreign direct investment. We have once again resolved to commit ourselves to ensure that all of our countries and peoples can benefit as they must from the globalization process. To that end, efforts will continue to be made to consolidate peace throughout the region, to harmonize sectoral policies and to implement sound economic policies.

During the Maputo Summit, the heads of State and Government signed three important documents: on wildlife, on health and on productivity. They welcomed the recent entry into force of the SADC Protocols on Shared Watercourse Systems, on Energy, on Transport, Communications and Meteorology, and on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking, and the charter of the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa. The entry into force of the Trade Protocol on 1 January 2000 will bring additional opportunities and challenges to our region, and will enhance the programme initiated a few years ago with the entry into force of other protocols. All these legal instruments are, indeed, important steps towards regional integration leading to a better future.

In southern Africa, HIV/AIDS is spreading at an alarming rate. Governments in the SADC region, aware of the far-reaching negative consequences, are seeking collective and individual strategies to counter the spread of AIDS. In Lusaka, Zambia, we met at a regional level to look into advisable approaches that can enhance awareness within each country and to consider measures that can help Governments to mobilize financial and human resources to face this global threat. We have no choice: either we stop the spread of AIDS or we risk putting the viability of our societies at stake, because in our region the most qualified people are the ones at high risk.

This scenario foretells our future. Our economic, social and political development will remain on the horizon, and the structures of our societies will be seriously undermined, unless effective, concrete steps are taken. In this context, my Government very recently adopted a national strategy against HIV/AIDS.

The resolution on cooperation between SADC and the United Nations to be adopted this year must reflect the positive progress that has taken place within SADC, and stress the importance of greater interaction with the United Nations in all fields of common interest. At the same time, our Community — which is built on democratic principles, equitable and sustainable development, improved living standards of citizens, free movement of factors of production, goods and services — remains equally committed to strengthening its relationship with other regional organizations.

The search for a durable peace is still a constant objective of the region. It is for this reason that we welcome the progress made in the settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The signing of the agreement by all parties opens a new era for the region and beyond. What is required now is for the international community, particularly the United Nations, to meet its responsibilities by sending, as expeditiously as possible, peacekeeping forces with an appropriate mandate and adequate resources, under Chapter VII of the Charter, for the achievement of lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We hope that the progress to which I have referred to above will make a positive impact on the Angolan conflict. The people of Angola must be given the opportunity to live in peace and harmony. The international community has a moral and political obligation to assist the Angolans to reverse the humanitarian tragedy which is unfolding in vast areas of their territory. At the same time, the international community, while supporting the Government of Angola in restoring peace and stability in that country, must call on Mr. Savimbi to abandon his aggressive and irresponsible action. In particular, the Security Council sanctions imposed on UNITA must be fully observed, in order to prevent further suffering in that SADC country.

In this context, we salute the positive work already done by Ambassador Robert Fowler, Chairman of the Security Council sanctions committee, and we encourage him to continue with his work.

This is our vision of the future of Mozambique as an individual country and also that of SADC as a whole.

The recurrence of conflicts in Africa has exacerbated the plight of children as the main victims. The recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit, held in Algiers, echoing the recommendations of the African Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, held in Maputo in April this year, adopted a resolution calling, *inter alia*, for the elaboration of an international convention outlawing the use of children under 18 years of age in armed conflicts. We urge all members of the United Nations to adhere to and support this initiative, which, in our view, must be associated with all other rights of the child.

We believe that the implementation of that OAU resolution, together with the concept of "children as zone of peace" would constitute a valuable contribution to the protection of children. In this regard, I commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict and non-governmental organizations for their relentless efforts to promote and ensure respect for the rights of the child.

Moreover, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, together with transnational crimes such as money laundering and drug trafficking, constitute major sources of instability for many countries, including my own. We in southern Africa are undertaking a coordinated action with a view to addressing these challenges and bringing about peace and stability.

In May this year Maputo hosted the First Meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The Maputo Meeting was held when thousands of innocent civilians were being maimed in many parts of the world, including my own country. The Meeting adopted a Declaration calling upon us to rededicate ourselves in the struggle against these insidious weapons, in fulfilment of our obligations under the Ottawa Convention. More important, the Maputo Meeting offered a unique opportunity to remind the international community of the need to meet the targets set by the Convention. In four years we must destroy all anti-personnel mines in warehouses, and in ten years we must complete the demining process in affected countries.

As we concluded in Maputo, these targets are non-negotiable. What is negotiable is the ways and means for the attainment of these objectives. We therefore call upon all States and organizations in a position to do so to ensure that these goals are met. Failure to reach these goals would undermine the credibility of the international community and, above all, the universalization of the Convention. It is our earnest hope that the General Assembly will give additional impetus to the momentum created by the adoption of the Maputo Declaration.

We in southern Africa are disturbed about the low levels of foreign direct investment in Africa. We are deeply concerned about recent evidence presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) showing a drastic reduction in official development assistance, in particular for Africa. More worrisome is the fact that the target of 0.7 per cent in official development assistance has never been entirely met, and, on the contrary, it has reached only one third of the established target.

Lack of adequate funding has contributed to poor realization of the goals set by major international conferences, including those contained in the Cairo Programme of Action, which was reviewed during the recently held twenty-first special session of the General Assembly on population and development.

Without political will there will be no sustainable development in the global economy, and the risk of the further marginalization of developing countries, with all of its negative consequences, will remain high.

In addition, the issue of external indebtedness continues to be the single most important obstacle to the development of many countries, particularly in Africa. Efforts must be made to ensure that the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative is accessible to the countries in need.

As I speak on this issue, I must once again thank the international community for the assistance rendered to Mozambique under this Initiative, as of last June. The fact of the matter, however, is that our debt burden continues to undermine our efforts to achieve sustainable development. We believe it is high time for the international community to start writing off the external debt of those countries that have made visible and

sustainable progress in the implementation of tough structural adjustment measures and political reforms. Such a course of action would undoubtedly provide more incentives for other countries to undertake these measures and to redirect resources to the social sectors, in particular for the provision of water and better education and to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

My Government wishes to commend the 5 May Agreement signed by the Governments of Indonesia, Portugal and United Nations which culminated in the holding of a referendum in East Timor. We salute the people of East Timor for the exemplary and orderly manner in which they participated in the referendum and for the clear and unequivocal way in which they decided for independence. We are deeply saddened and gravely concerned over the tragic developments that have followed the announcement of the results of the referendum. We are particularly distressed over the fact that massacres against innocent civilians and indiscriminate destruction of property have occurred, largely due to the failure by Indonesia to secure order and by the international community to act expeditiously.

The fact that the East Timor tragedy occurred when similar situations had been prevented not long ago leads us to believe in the existence of passivity and selectivity in dealing with issues that undermine international peace and security. We nevertheless commend the decision taken by the Security Council to send a mission to Jakarta and Dili and the subsequent actions taken with the cooperation of the Government of Indonesia.

Along with restoring peace and stability, efforts must be made to provide a speedy humanitarian response to assist the people who were displaced or became refugees as a result of the unprecedented levels of violence we have witnessed in that territory. The tragedy in East Timor underlines the importance of translating into deeds the relevant recommendations contained in the "Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict".

Mozambique has given its modest contribution to the United Nations Mission in East Timor and stands ready to continue to play a role in future efforts of the international community.

On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, I wish to seize this opportunity to convey our deepest sympathy to those who have lost their loved ones. It is our hope that their suffering will not be in vain, and that the United Nations and all parties will ensure the early implementation of the results of the referendum.

The issue of East Timor reminds us of other people who are striving for self-determination. We are encouraged by the latest positive developments that have taken place in the Middle East. They confirm that, with the necessary political will, taking into account the interests of all parties to the conflict, peace is possible in that region. Our task is to help the Palestinians and the Israelis take maximum advantage of the momentum that has been created as a result of the signing of the Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum, on 4 September 1999, following the deadlock in the implementation of the Wye River Memorandum of 23 October 1998. Success in the implementation of the current Memorandum depends on strict observance of the principle of land for peace.

Recent incidents along the common border between India and Pakistan are a source of great concern to all peace-loving countries. We call upon both Governments to exercise maximum restraint and to refrain from taking actions that might jeopardize further the already volatile situation along their common border.

It is our earnest hope that the United Nations intervention in Kosovo will bring lasting peace and stability to that territory and the region. To this end Mozambique is contributing with a small team of police officers.

We equally hope that now that the Lockerbie issue is in the hands of justice, the Security Council will honour its undertakings by lifting the sanctions on Libya. Both the final settlement of this issue and the holding of a referendum in Western Sahara will have a positive impact on the development of Africa.

We are at the threshold of the next century, and the challenges ahead are enormous. They require stronger commitment and greater international cooperation. In this connection, we wish to commend the Secretary-General for organizing the Millennium Assembly and the millennium summit for the year 2000. Indeed, there could be no better way to inaugurate the new era than by assembling all world leaders to reflect on the strategies and policies that will govern our planet in the next millennium. Whatever themes we choose to debate, they should include the promotion of a culture of peace within nations, regions and throughout the world, for this will allow the realization of all other objectives, in particular the eradication of poverty, promotion of development,

protection of human rights and meeting the challenges of globalization.

It is therefore our hope that the forthcoming historic gatherings will signal the beginning of the crystallization of the process of building a better and safer world by producing meaningful strategies, actions and policies that will guide the United Nations of tomorrow. We agree that these high-level events should not result merely in the adoption of declarations that cannot be translated into concrete actions for both the United Nations and Governments.

We should therefore aim at pragmatic, action-oriented and implementable decisions. Then, and only then, shall we meet the aspirations of the founding fathers of our universal Organization.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by The Honourable Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands.

The Honourable Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, His Excellency The Honourable Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ulufu'alu (Solomon Islands): Let me express my sincere congratulations, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Under your leadership, I am confident the Assembly will effectively address the issues before it.

My Government salutes the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and the United Nations agencies for their dedication and commitment to building peace and confidence around the world. The Solomon Islands also applauds the Secretary-General's programme of modernization and revitalization of the Organization, aimed at creating a more effective United Nations to better serve the development needs of its Members, thus ensuring peace and security in the twenty-first century. My country will be a committed partner in achieving this goal in the new millennium.

The Government and people of the Solomon Islands warmly welcome the admission of our sister nations — the Republic of Nauru, the Republic of Kiribati and the Kingdom of Tonga — as new Members of the United Nations. This makes the principle of universality, as stipulated by the United Nations Charter, a near reality. It is also further testimony that the United Nations is indispensable. Its body of international laws is central to the protection and security of our small island States.

While there have been important successes for the international community, peace and development in many parts of the world remain precarious. The past decade has witnessed the increase in the world's illicit drug problem and its related crimes, terrorism, large-scale movement and trade in small arms and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Equally alarming is the rise in local and regional conflicts in various parts of the world and the threat they pose to national and international peace, stability and advancement. Poverty, meanwhile, remains a major obstacle to the economic progress of many developing countries, especially the least developed. In addition, the economic threats associated with globalization and trade liberalization have increased in recent years.

For small island developing States like the Solomon Islands, post-cold-war security now embraces human, environmental and economic dimensions. The most important asset of any country is its people. In a small island developing State like mine, investment in human-resource development is not only vital, but a critical prerequisite to embracing national peace, stability and economic prosperity.

In this connection, the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as reiterated by many representatives at the special session earlier this week, remains a valid blueprint for the sustainable development of small island

developing States, including my country. The environmental and economic vulnerabilities of small island developing States present major difficulties to our efforts to achieve sustainable development. Climate change and sea-level rise are matters of survival for the small island developing States. Annex I parties must fulfil their commitment under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The increasing incidence and magnitude of natural disasters are particularly alarming. On the other hand, the overall decline in official development assistance flows, the erosion of trade preferences, falling primary commodity prices and limited market access could severely harm our small and fragile economies. Hence, greater international support is required for the successful implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the future.

My Government recognizes the importance of good governance to advance human development and to promote sustained economic growth. We are taking measures towards this end. The call for good governance, however, must be accompanied by the necessary resources and the creation of an enabling regional and international environment.

Allow me to outline the views and some of the steps taken by my Government to address some of the aforementioned issues, including our efforts to create and strengthen accountable administrative and financial institutions, as well as the appropriate policies and legislation.

When my Government assumed office in September 1997, we were confronted with a major financial crisis in the public sector. The domestic financial system was overburdened with public debt, which the Government was unable to service. Additionally, the Asian financial crisis in late 1997 further deepened the crisis in the domestic economy. The public service was unable to deliver goods and services effectively and efficiently. The private sector became stagnant. This state of affairs demanded an urgent overhaul of the public sector and the need to create a vibrant private sector. Short-term, medium-term and long-term measures had to be taken.

Thus, my Government responded with a series of policy statements committing itself to a broad-based programme of policy and structural reforms. The overall goals of the policy and structural-reform programme are to foster financial and macroeconomic stability, to establish a more effective and efficient public service and to create an environment for the private sector that is conducive to viable growth and sustainability.

It is obvious that, although we have the primary responsibility to implement our reform initiatives, we cannot do it alone. The experiences of small economies that have undertaken similar reforms indicate that such reforms can be accelerated by access to capital — often grant in aid — technical assistance, technology transfers, assured markets for primary commodities and links to new market locations. Therefore, the political will that my Government has demonstrated has to be supplemented by significant international support if we are to fulfil the aspirations of our people.

I am grateful to our bilateral and multilateral development partners for the positive response they have shown so far towards our reform initiatives. Additional assistance will be required to implement, in particular, our medium-term development strategy and our public sector investment programme.

Peace and development are mutually interdependent. In this connection, the current insurgency on the island of Guadalcanal is a big set-back to our development efforts. It has already affected various sectors of the economy and caused the displacement of more than 30,000 people. While the crisis may not be comparable to major conflicts in other parts of the world, its net result in human loss and suffering is relative. This crisis has to be understood in the context of our smallness, our limited resources, our ethnic and cultural diversity and our history. The Solomon Islands, with a population of 400,000, has more than 80 different languages. Thus, if the insurgency is left to escalate, it could seriously threaten national peace and security.

My Government is, therefore, firmly committed to an early resolution of the conflict. The engagement of the Commonwealth special envoy is a preventive measure to bring about reconciliation between the parties concerned. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat in this regard. Three agreements to settle the crisis have been reached. We are working very hard to ensure their implementation.

I am also grateful for the prompt response of the United Nations Secretary-General to my request for a United Nations mission to assess the humanitarian aspects of the crisis. My Government is committed to working closely with the appropriate United Nations agencies to implement the recommendations of that mission. We also

appreciate the humanitarian assistance of our development partners, including the Red Cross, to the displaced population. My Government is fully aware of the need to pursue the necessary policies and programmes for nation-building through the creation of long-term development strategies that promote social cohesion and national unity.

My Government attaches great importance to regional cooperation, security and development. The political, economic and environmental regional organizations in our region, including the South Pacific Forum, the South Pacific Environmental Programme, the Pacific Community, the South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency and the South Pacific Geoscience Commission, provide vital mechanisms for policy advice and action on issues of regional concern and interest, especially in the areas of the environment, population, fisheries resources management and vulnerability index. The Solomon Islands has benefited from their contributions and thus will continue to support and actively participate in their activities. The thirtieth South Pacific Forum meeting, to be held in Palau next week, provides an opportunity for us to discuss how best to strengthen regional cooperation in order to effectively cope with the challenges of the new millennium and to harness the opportunities it will bring.

Furthermore, my Government will continue to support the efforts of the Government of Papua New Guinea to rebuild peace and confidence on Bougainville. We also note the contributions of other South Pacific neighbours and of the United Nations in this process.

The Solomon Islands further welcomes the progress made in the last decade in the decolonization process in New Caledonia. We reiterate our support for the aspirations of the Kanaks of New Caledonia to attain self-government and political independence. The process towards self-determination for other remaining non-self-governing territories, including Guam and French Polynesia, must also be facilitated. The United Nations is well placed to continue to facilitate this process.

My Government is concerned about the deterioration of law and order in East Timor following the referendum on self-determination. The parties concerned must now honour the outcome of the referendum. Violence must not be used to deny the choice that was made by the overwhelming majority: the chance to move forward. The Solomon Islands appreciates the leading role of Australia and New Zealand in the international peacekeeping mission in East Timor.

At this juncture, let me renew the support of the Solomon Islands for the appeal of the 22 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be represented in the United Nations and its related organizations. Taiwan is capable of and willing to fulfil the obligations contained in the Charter of the United Nations. Its outstanding economic success has enabled it to play a positive role in promoting world trade and in eradicating poverty. It has rendered development assistance, including technical training and technology transfer, to developing countries, including my own. It has responded to United Nations appeals for emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance to countries that have suffered from natural disasters and wars.

Regarding the accomplishments of the Republic of China on Taiwan, are these not sufficient to merit diplomatic recognition from the international community? Taiwan's membership in the United Nations system would contribute substantially to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and of the world in general. It would also provide an effective basis for peaceful dialogue. The process of self-realization, supported by the United Nations, has resulted in the membership of North and South Korea in the United Nations. The United Nations ought to give similar consideration to the question of Taiwan. Ideally, the membership of the Republic of China on Taiwan, together with the People's Republic of China, will make a stronger United Nations. The Solomon Islands would welcome the opportunity to work through the United Nations system to achieve a peaceful and just resolution.

My Government joins those who spoke before me in supporting the call by the Secretary-General to accord high priority to preventive action to address the rise in local, national and regional conflicts. Are the current mechanisms available to the United Nations adequate to effectively resolve small-scale armed conflicts? Is there a role for regional organizations to make a contribution to this preventive approach? The reform of the Security Council should include consideration of a workable and effective preventive strategy. In addition, a reconfiguration of the United Nations regional groupings is necessary to reflect present-day realities and to accommodate the interests and concerns of Member States.

Perhaps the most profound challenge for the next century is how to deal with the imperatives of globalization, that is, capitalizing on its positives and mitigating its negatives. In other words, the challenge of

globalization in the new era is not to halt the expansion of global markets, but to find the rules and institutions for stronger governance to preserve the advantages of global markets and competition within a framework of cooperation to enhance human progress.

Only the United Nations and other international institutions have the scope and the legitimacy to generate the principles, norms and rules that are essential if globalization is to benefit everyone. Developing countries, in particular the least developed, need international support to build the capacities to enable us to become more effectively and beneficially integrated into the global economy. Debt relief, new and additional resources for development and better diverse trade opportunities are required to facilitate this process.

The Millennium Assembly, to be held in September 2000, affords a unique opportunity for all States to discuss and exchange views on how best to address the many challenges facing us. My Government looks forward to participating actively in this important gathering. Equally important are the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives; the review of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women; and the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in the year 2001.

Finally, the United Nations needs adequate financial resources to achieve its objectives. The current financial difficulties do not bode well for the Organization. Member States must honour their Charter obligations and pay their dues in full, on time, and without conditions. Despite our own economic and financial constraints, my Government has settled most of its arrears to the United Nations, including contributions to the regular budget for 1999 and peacekeeping operations.

This century has witnessed vast advances in transport and communications technology, the increase of global trade and wealth and improvements in the area of international peace and security. New information and communications technologies have driven globalization. Unfortunately, these achievements, including the benefits and opportunities of globalization, have not been widely enjoyed and distributed. Global governance of globalization must focus on human security, development, equity, ethics, inclusion and sustainability. Let us unite in the spirit of the new millennium to build a better world to live in.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger

The President: The Assembly will next hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Mayaki (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I am delighted to have the opportunity at this fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly to share with the entire international community the concerns — but also the hope — that inspire the nation of Niger in the progress of world events.

The Niger welcomes the new Member States — the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga — to membership of the United Nations community.

I would also like to say how proud and pleased we are, Sir, over your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly for this session. On behalf of the delegation of the Niger, I wish to sincerely congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau. Your professional skills and your well-known human qualities, as well as your unceasing commitment to your country, Namibia, and to the defence of the noble causes of humanity, guarantee the successful outcome of the Assembly's work.

My delegation also has the agreeable duty of paying a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the excellent work done during his term of office.

The presence at your side of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose devotion and constant desire to serve the causes I have mentioned are well-established, reinforces our conviction that the outcome of this session will make it possible to lay a sound basis for the future of a world that is less unjust, more peaceful, more prosperous — and, in a word, more human.

The Niger is a landlocked, heavily indebted country which has for almost a decade suffered from chronic institutional instability. This situation has seriously undermined its people's efforts to establish a viable political, economic and social environment. Since its accession to independence in August 1960 the Republic of the Niger has experienced profound upheavals which have affected its progress towards the establishment of a democratic, harmonious and prosperous society.

But these upheavals, far from weakening the democratic ideal of our people, have strengthened its resolve to overcome these challenges. Strengthened by this conviction, the Council for National Reconciliation and the Government resulting from the events of 9 April 1999 have made the strong commitment that the people of the Niger, at peace with itself and possessing stable and durable democratic institutions, will be able to meet the challenges of the third millennium.

On 18 July, in a referendum, the people of the Niger adopted the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, which will lead to the establishment of lasting democratic institutions.

The timetable decided on by our Independent National Electoral Commission sets the first round of presidential elections for 17 October. The second round will be held at the same time as the general elections, on 24 November. The investiture and assumption of office of the President-elect of the Republic will take place on 31 December 1999.

In this respect, every step has been taken to organize the elections in the most transparent, honest and neutral way possible. The measures taken include a ban on the military's submitting candidates for the presidential and general elections, even if those candidates are on leave of absence or have resigned from the military. The Government will ensure that the elections are held in a spirit of impartiality.

With this same aim, the Independent National Electoral Commission was institutionalized and a national communications monitor set up to guarantee equal access to public media and to ensure that the press is free and constructive.

Basically, therefore, our political transition is on the right track, and the instruments for this transition will be active until power is handed over to the duly, freely elected authorities.

In view of all this, we hope that our traditional external partners will help us establish true democracy in the Niger. We expect their support, which is necessary to help us in the process of establishing dialogue among all parties concerned to guarantee the holding of credible, honest elections.

But as the Assembly is aware, democracy does not just mean holding a series of elections. A legal arsenal and a different way of thinking are essential to consolidate democracy, and this is why we have started giving organized, concerted consideration to the drafting of basic texts that will govern the future Republic.

Varied and burning issues, such as the depoliticization of the administration, the electoral code, the charter of political parties, the status of the opposition and the role of the army in a democratic context have been tackled.

In this context, I call upon interested States to take part in the national workshop to be held next December on the theme "The army and democracy in Africa: the case of the Niger".

I wish very sincerely to thank all bilateral and multilateral partners of the Niger, in particular United Nations agencies, and more specifically the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for having continued to support my country's efforts to create the right institutional environment to restore social peace and to enable men and women of the Niger to meet the major challenges they face. This highly appreciated assistance will continue to be necessary in this decisive phase of the democratic process and the process of national reconciliation.

The recurrent theme of post-conflict insecurity deserves special attention from the United Nations system. The Niger, resolutely committed to the process of cantonment, disarmament and socio-economic reintegration of elements of the former rebel army which rampaged in the north and far east of the country a few

years ago, fully supports the programme for collecting and destroying small arms.

It is in this spirit that my country submitted to the Secretariat a plan to put an end to the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. It endorsed the decision taken by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in June 1998 and the declaration adopted by the heads of State and Government of member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in October 1998 to deal with the destabilizing effects and the threat to peace and security posed by the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons for the West African region and for the entire continent.

We welcome the emerging concordance of views and action regarding the priority nature of this question among African organizations on the one hand, and other international institutions — including those of the United Nations system, the European Union and the Organization of American States — on the other. This international consensus will make it possible to take effective steps in time for the upcoming international conference on all aspects of the illicit arms trade, to be held in 2001.

The Niger has always sought to make its modest contribution to the settlement of conflicts that threaten peace and security in Africa and throughout the rest of the world. Despite our limited resources, we sent troops to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, as well as civilian police officers to Haiti. In this regard, my Government wishes to reaffirm its constant willingness to send military and police contingents to all United Nations peacekeeping operations when needed.

In Africa, thanks to the efforts of the international community, we have reason to hope that the process leading to the referendum on self-determination for the Sahraoui people will soon lead to a final settlement of this question.

The conclusion of the Peace Agreement in Sierra Leone under the aegis of ECOWAS and the Ceasefire Agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have given us a glimmer of hope. These efforts must be continued and must serve as an example for those involved in other conflicts, such as in Angola, in Somalia or in the armed confrontation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

It must be acknowledged that these situations of crisis and insecurity demand first and foremost that African Governments and leaders of public opinion commit themselves resolutely to dealing with factors of instability on a consensus basis. In this respect, my Government and my people would like through me to welcome the individual and collective initiatives to create or consolidate an environment of peace and security in Africa, which is a sine qua non for development.

Outstanding and effective initiatives have been taken in various places and should be welcomed. Among these is the action initiated by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, who had the praiseworthy idea of holding on 16 September last, a referendum on civil concord, which was massively supported by the Algerian people. The Government and the people of the Niger welcome this genuine plebiscite and the prospects it ushers in for that fraternal country.

The Niger also welcomes the positive developments in the Lockerbie case. We believe that conditions now exist for the total lifting of sanctions against the great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

In the Middle East, the attention of the international community is still focused on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which, fortunately, seems to have been revived with the change in the leadership of the Israeli Government.

In Asia, the Jammu and Kashmir conflict remains a source of great tension between two nuclear States, India and Pakistan, and a persistent, serious threat to peace and security in that part of South Asia.

The Niger, therefore, as a member of the contact group established by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, reiterates its appeal to both parties to step up their negotiations in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict by recognizing the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

In Europe, my Government welcomes the return of peace to the Balkans. The establishment of an administration under United Nations control is a sure guarantee for the safe return of the refugees.

It is more essential and urgent than ever to reverse the decline in official development assistance which, it must be recalled, is at its lowest level in 50 years. In order to meet this challenge, the international community must consider the possibility of mobilizing additional resources. It is therefore urgent that progress be made

within the framework of the initiatives taken at world summits. At the same time, we must pool our efforts to increase the effectiveness of aid by reviewing its modalities and through its sound and rigorous management.

It is on the basis of this experience that my Government adopted a national strategy note and an economic recovery programme that clearly defines the coherent networks for action by our development partners. Furthermore, the crucial problem of African countries' debt -- which is wiping out all development efforts -- calls for the international community as a whole to implement, without delay or conditions other than good public administration, appropriate regulatory policies and mechanisms.

In this connection, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as the recent initiative undertaken in Cologne at the Group of 7 Summit, must be extended to all the least developed countries in order to produce the effects we hope to see. This must take the form of an outright cancellation of the debt.

Despite the outstanding efforts made by many African countries in the area of economic reform, foreign private investment flows are still meagre, notwithstanding the enabling environment that has been established. We very much hope that the positive initiative taken by the Secretary-General at Davos will allow greater involvement by the private sector in implementing adequate measures to reverse that tendency. It is in this connection that my delegation would like to appeal to all development partners to help reinforce the institutional capacities of our States and to create adequate infrastructures, which are guarantees of balanced development.

The second special dialogue between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions held here on 29 April 1999 reaffirmed the need to continue the reform of the international financial system, bearing in mind social imperatives and the external debt situation, that is to say, the close link between settling debt, poverty reduction and lasting development.

Niger belongs to the group of least developed countries and has a population that is growing at an annual rate of 3.4 per cent. It has a fertility rate of 7.4 children per woman and a life expectancy of 47 years, and is ranked among the poorest countries of the world. Despite all these constraints, my country has made efforts to design and implement initiatives in keeping with the recommendations of the population conferences.

These various difficulties have exacerbated the political instability I referred to before and have kept our country at the bottom of the human development table. Poverty affects 63 per cent of our compatriots, 34 per cent of whom live below the extreme poverty threshold. Those people are victims of continued declining maternal, childhood and adolescent health standards -- a critical social and health situation marked by high mortality and illiteracy rates, one of the lowest standards of education and insufficient drinking water resources. They even lack basic social services.

The economic and financial crisis that has hit my country has, among other things, led to a drastic reduction in public investment, particularly in the social sectors, thus depriving 80 per cent of the rural population of adequate living standards. With the valuable assistance of international financial institutions we have initiated an enormous economic recovery programme to confront this situation. This programme includes, among other things, a series of economic and financial reforms and framework programmes to restore the macroeconomic balance, reduce poverty and stimulate growth.

I wish, from this rostrum, to reiterate our great appreciation for the ongoing support that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other development partners have been steadily providing to implement our national framework programme to combat poverty. This programme we are implementing is one of the priorities of the first country cooperation framework adopted by the UNDP Governing Council last January.

I would like here to make a heartfelt appeal to the United Nations system to allocate sufficient supplementary resources to UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA so that they can complete their development activities in the least developed countries. This appeal also goes out to the international community to supply all the necessary support to my country so that the major challenges we are confronting can be met.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, special attention should be given to making a reality of the universality of our world Organization. Peace, security and development are too important to be the sole responsibility of a club of military, economic and

financial Powers. Africa, which now figures prominently among international initiatives and hopes to become an active partner in those initiatives, must play an important role within a reformed Security Council. Africa has countries that can play a decisive role in that regard.

A large number of countries, including my own, that share the use of French with other States of the world very much hope that they can work in all United Nations bodies and agencies in their official language. The member States of the Organisation international de la Francophonie, which is increasingly establishing itself as an essential actor in world affairs, will make an additional contribution in the give-and-take process in the third millennium.

In conclusion, I should like to express the confidence that Niger and its people have in the United Nations, which is trying very hard to be an institution that embodies hope on the basis of justice, equity, peace, freedom and progress. These values will build the coming twenty-first century we are expecting if the United Nations is stronger and more effective.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal.

The Right Honourable Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I take great pleasure in welcoming The Right Honourable Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): I bring to you, Mr. President, to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to all representatives the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Birendra and of the Government and people of Nepal. Your election is testimony to the wide recognition of your great country's contribution to the cause of freedom of the peoples and to the work of the United Nations. Please accept our congratulations and pledge of support. Our appreciation goes also to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the wise manner in which he conducted the business of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

The massive loss of life and property and the untold suffering caused by the recent earthquakes to the peoples of Turkey, Greece and Taiwan have touched the hearts of the Nepalese people. Indeed, our hearts go out to the hundreds of thousands of peoples across the globe who have suffered from both natural and man-made disasters.

Nepal wholeheartedly welcomes Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga as new Members of the United Nations. Their admission has enriched the world Organization and enhanced its universality.

Following the restoration of the multi-party political system in Nepal, I had the unique privilege of steering the country at a turning point of history as its Prime Minister, entrusted with the twin responsibilities of overseeing the formulation of a new democratic constitution of the Kingdom and the holding of free, fair and peaceful general elections at the beginning of the last decade of this century. With the people's trust and guidance, the cooperation of all political parties and the support of His Majesty the King, and above all with God's will, those responsibilities were fully discharged.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal not only guarantees the fundamental human rights of the people but also the independence of the judiciary. It defines and protects the basic tenets of parliamentary democracy in Nepal, and it identifies the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as the fundamental plank of the foreign policy of the country. Standing today before this Assembly of nations, I wish to reaffirm Nepal's commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations and to share, in brief, our hopes, aspirations and views.

Last year we observed the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone in human history. The fiftieth anniversary of another historical milestone — the Geneva Conventions of 1949 — this year provides the international community with another opportunity to reiterate its deepening commitment to democracy, human rights and improved living conditions for peoples. At the national level, we regard the protection and promotion of human rights as a *sine qua non* for the all-round development of the people. Democracy and development, I believe, are two sides of the same coin, hard to guarantee and secure

except in a state of peace and stability under a system of participatory good governance.

Nepal is a nation with a young democratic setup and an ever-deepening commitment to human rights and the all-round development of the people, who are beset with the numerous unique and onerous challenges characteristic of a small land-locked and least developed country with difficult Himalayan and mountainous terrains and the greatest of contemporary problems — poverty. At no point in history have we witnessed poverty eating up so systematically the spiritual richness of peoples in many countries, including Nepal — the land of the Buddha.

Nepal's development efforts are driven by an overriding objective of poverty eradication through employment and income generation, social mobilization and the strengthening of social capital within a democratic values-based system. The country has almost unlimited potential for hydropower development and tourism, and we have created legislative conditions for the participation of foreign investors in these sectors as well as in other trade and services-generating sectors in Nepal. Our commitment to sustainable development has been translated into several measures aimed at the preservation of the environment and ecological balance, including the earmarking of a large part of our land area for the development of wildlife parks and nature reserves. I want at this stage to reiterate our commitment to the development of Lumbini — the birthplace of the Buddha — as an enduring peace monument, a holy shrine for pilgrimage and one of the world's greatest cultural heritages.

I am disheartened that despite several world summits, conferences and international commitments, absolute poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and hopelessness should still remain the lot of the bulk of the world's population. One billion adults, the majority of them women, cannot read or write. Almost a billion people are underfed and malnourished, and a similar number have no access to clean water, shelter or health care. Many millions die before they reach the age of 40.

Equally threatening is the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. The conclusion of this year's *Human Development Report* is the unbelievable polarization between peoples and countries, which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) characterized as grotesque and dangerous. The one fifth of the world's population in the highest-income countries commands 86 per cent of world gross domestic product and 82 per cent of world export markets, while the bottom fifth, in the poorest countries has just 1 per cent of both categories. How long can the world go on like this, with a small part of its people living in freedom and prosperity while the larger segment is living in fetters under abject conditions, before calamity engulfs us all?

A few years ago, at the request of the heads of State or Government of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, I undertook the task of chairing the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation as part of a regional endeavour to work out regional strategies and programmes of action for the eradication of poverty from South Asia. My own experience as Chairman of that Commission leads me to the inescapable conclusion that the goal of poverty eradication requires, among other things, sustained political will and commitment of the highest order, an integrated and coordinated approach and decisive national actions, with the participation of all, including grass-roots organizations and civil society, backed by enhanced international development cooperation.

But the fast-dwindling official development assistance flows and ever-increasing resource constraints of United Nations development agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, make our task of poverty eradication and development harder and harder with each passing year. This is particularly true in the case of least developed and landlocked countries such as Nepal. While we deeply appreciate the help of our development partners, we urge developed countries, which are undoubtedly in a position to do so, to generously increase the volume of their official development assistance so as to attain the target set by this Assembly. Reallocation of official development assistance in favour of the less developed countries is another area which deserves attention.

As we are a democratic nation, women — who make up half of every country's population — are the backbone of Nepalese society. We can hardly remain oblivious to the urgent need for their empowerment and advancement. We have made legislative arrangements to guarantee their participation in the national polity by reserving exclusively for them as many as 40,000 seats in the local elected bodies. In the three general elections since 1991, the number of women parliamentarians has steadily gone up. But we are aiming for more. Their literacy rate is also improving. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to which Nepal recently presented its country report, has acknowledged the progress made in raising the status of

women in general and in increasing understanding of gender issues and the human rights of women among the Nepalese population. We know we have to do a lot more, and I am personally committed to this.

We are equally committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child as well as the rights and interests of other vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of society. In short, we have before us a large agenda for nation-building, for the consolidation of gains in democracy and human rights and for living up to our international commitment to peace, cooperation and development in the world. We are dealing with the agenda with a sense of purpose and commitment, although there are several obvious difficulties, including the economic, social, environmental and political problems created by 100,000 refugees from Bhutan. We seek the continued support and understanding of the international community in the creation of an environment conducive to the resolution of this problem through bilateral negotiations. We also seek its support for their sustenance until they are repatriated.

I wish to place on record our appreciation of and gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the world's foremost public servant, for his efforts and successes in defusing tensions around the world and solving many seemingly intractable problems, such as those of Libya and the popular consultation in East Timor. I am impressed with his impassioned call for the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention in the United Nations. He has drawn our attention to the benefits and risks provided by globalization and to the need for strengthened international cooperation to offset the vulnerability of many countries, particularly the least developed and landlocked ones, and the marginalization of Africa.

We have noted his emphasis on the maintenance of international peace and security as the primary responsibility of the Security Council. We thank him also for his dedication to comprehensive United Nations reform and for his package of reform proposals. Reform is a continuing process. It will be neither meaningful nor complete unless we arrive at a ratifiable global consensus on the functioning and composition of a reformed Security Council. The statement of the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members that any attempt to restrict or curtail their veto rights would not be conducive to the reform process is a matter of deep disappointment. Nepal supports the common position evolved at the Durban Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement on the question of Security Council reform. We are also firm in our view that no reform measure should curtail the authority of the General Assembly, which is the nearest thing to a world parliament.

The United Nations cannot continue to function effectively without a fair and sound financial base. Assessed dues must be paid in full and on time. Peacekeeping is a unique and most useful instrument for the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Nepal has participated in United Nations peacekeeping for over 40 years in all parts of the world. Some 35,000 of our troops and 800 of our police have served with many peacekeeping operations, 39 having been martyred and several more wounded in the line of duty. It is the firm policy of Nepal not only to maintain but also to increase our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping.

It is disappointing that for three years in a row the principal United Nations forum for disarmament negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament, has not been able to agree on an agenda of work. Some important arms control and disarmament measures have been adopted without reference to the Conference on Disarmament. As host to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal's commitment to general and complete disarmament, including total nuclear disarmament, remains undiluted.

In the summer months of this year, South Asia witnessed a flare-up between two of our close neighbours. Disquieting because it broke a peace that had lasted for nearly three decades, it also exposed the myth fostered in a bygone era that countries possessing nuclear weapons would not go to conventional war against each other. The risk of an accidental nuclear war engulfing other countries was magnified by the close proximity of the two countries. Leaving aside the causes of that flare-up, I would like to commend the Prime Ministers and the Governments of the two countries for their restraint, good sense and wisdom in containing the conflict and displaying a high degree of responsibility to their peoples, to the rest of South Asia and to the peoples of the entire world. May I take this opportunity once again to appeal to the Prime Ministers of those two countries to resume their dialogue, begun in Lahore last February.

Nepal welcomes the Sharm el-Sheikh accord between Prime Minister Barak and President Arafat as an irreversible step forward in the Middle East peace process. It opens the way to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We hope, for the sake of peace,

that negotiations between Syria and Israel and Lebanon will soon resume in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Let me conclude with a brief mention of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which consists of the seven countries of the region, representing one fifth of humanity. We are united in a common effort to enhance the quality of life of all our peoples. I am looking forward to hosting the next summit meeting of heads of State or Government of the South Asian region in two months' time at Kathmandu. Our important agenda will deal with such issues as free trade and a SAARC social charter. We will also be signing a regional convention on combatting the crime of trafficking in women and children. This will be another landmark in the work of SAARC, a regional association dedicated to peace and cooperation in South Asia.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal for his statement.

The Right Honourable Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I call next on the Chairman of the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Abuzed Omar Dorda.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset, Sir, to express the warm congratulations of my delegation and of my country on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. You are one of sisterly Namibia's freedom fighters, and one of Africa's faithful sons. Your unanimous election to your important post and your country's simultaneous membership of the Security Council are strong evidence of the respect and appreciation that Namibia enjoys in the eyes of the entire international community. In the Security Council, Namibia's notable positions on important international issues also irrefutably demonstrate Namibia's unremitting struggle for freedom, right, sovereignty and justice — a struggle now waged by means different from those that Namibia used during its independence struggle.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, for his successful guidance of the previous session.

I wish also to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves our deepest appreciation for his continued efforts to make this Organization freer and less submissive to the domination and control of the super-Powers of this critical historical era.

Over the past several decades, the United Nations has made considerable achievements, the most notable of which has perhaps been its role in the elimination of direct colonialism and in the attainment of independence by many countries which today occupy their proper place as States Members of this Organization.

The world has witnessed fundamental changes, which imperatively call for serious reform of the United Nations and its basic structures, so that the Organization can truly perform its role as an umbrella, a haven and a reference-point for all. Colonialist soldiers have left the harbours and the airports, but with the collapse of international equilibrium, colonialists are reappearing in new guises, with new means and with both new and old approaches. Colonialism is coming back in the guise of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, other financial institutions, economic cartels, and, when necessary, military alliances. It is coming back in the guise of international conventions imposed through so-called international legitimacy, which is really nothing more than an expression of higher policies dictated through temptation or coercion. Colonialism is coming back in the guise of globalization, which is but a means of ensuring and consolidating dependence in terms of the economy, politics, culture and even social values.

Colonialism is also returning through direct armed invasion, when necessary, as we have recently witnessed. It is also returning through bilateral sanctions policies enforced through so-called international legitimacy and through selective disarmament or rearmament. Colonialism is returning through the elimination — not the mere violation — of State sovereignty. The slogan that is now much in vogue, "humanitarian intervention", will help erode the little that remains of State sovereignty. That pretext has been completely exposed. If the new Colonialists understood the real meaning of humanity, they would not be producing and stockpiling all kinds of weapons of mass destruction or committing aggression against others. Nor would they be imposing sanctions on countries, as they continue to do, with the

aim of humiliating, starving and killing their peoples. We declare our absolute rejection of intervention under any slogan.

This is the world following the collapse of international equilibrium: the strong and the rich are becoming stronger and richer, and the weak and the poor are becoming weaker, poorer and more deprived.

In the face of these fundamental changes, it has become necessary, indeed urgently imperative, that the United Nations should undergo a transformation that would enable it to respond to its new tasks as an umbrella, a haven and a reference point for all. This change will not happen by itself, nor will the powerful initiate it. The weaker nations can only resort to uniting their limitless efforts, strengths and potentials to bring about and impose such change. My country believes that this desired change must achieve the following:

First, the authority for decision-making in the United Nations must rest with the General Assembly, where Member States enjoy equal sovereignty.

Secondly, the Security Council must become an executive instrument or authority for the General Assembly.

Thirdly, there must be a radical revision of Security Council membership that will be equitable to all under-represented regions, particularly in the southern hemisphere: Africa, Asia and South America.

Fourthly, the Security Council's rules of procedures must be issued by the General Assembly, which represents the international community. Otherwise, it will be meaningless to say that the Security Council works on behalf of the international community. Quite simply put, the majority of the members of the international community did not participate in the formulation of the Charter. A very small number of the United Nations Members formulated it over half a century ago.

Fifthly, all privileges resulting from the victories and defeats of World War II must be abolished, particularly the privilege of veto, and any other privileges that prevent this most important international Organization from becoming truly democratic.

Despite the crises, conflicts and wars that ravage the African continent, this year has witnessed solutions for some of them, prospects for several others and initiatives for the solution of the remaining conflicts. As we express our satisfaction with this trend, we wish to recall, as we have always done, that African wars and conflicts are the product of the division of Africa by the colonial Powers, which must assume full responsibility for all the damages inflicted upon the continent, including an apology and full compensation to its peoples. The solutions reached for many African conflicts were a result of the enormous efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), subregional organizations, several African States and some African leaders who truly care about Africa's security, stability and development.

Libya has effectively supported and participated in these initiatives, and will continue to do so, in close cooperation with the OAU, all other concerned countries and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. As a contribution to the efforts made to tackle the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region, Libya has succeeded in convening a number of meetings, for heads of State of the region, in Sirte, Libya, where they reached the Sirte Agreement, later completed and signed in Lusaka, which is aimed at putting an end to the conflict in the area.

In Somalia, Libya continues its efforts, in coordination with all concerned countries and groups in conflict, for national reconciliation in that forgotten country. We hope that these efforts will result in the reunification and stability of Somalia. Libya has also contributed to bringing peace to Sierra Leone and stability to Guinea-Bissau, as well as contributing to the efforts undertaken by the OAU to put an end to the dispute between brothers in Ethiopia and Eritrea, in the Horn of Africa. A Libyan envoy was sent there to help end the war and bring peace to those two brotherly countries.

Africa's plights are not confined to wars and conflicts, but also include several economic and social problems: 44 per cent of Africans live in abject poverty; AIDS threatens the entire African population; malaria and other epidemic diseases still threaten the lives of millions in Africa. In respect of the latter, my country calls for the speedy adoption and implementation of an international plan to eradicate these diseases in Africa before it becomes impossible to contain and eliminate them. Attempts by African states to confront and solve these problems are hampered by the heavy debts of the continent, which reached $350 billion in 1998, equalling 300 per cent of the value of African exports and services. The time has come to cancel African debts and to deal

with this question on the basis of new and equitable principles.

In order to confront these challenges and to usher a strong and united Africa into the new century, our brother Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi extended an invitation to his brothers, the leaders of Africa, to convene an extraordinary summit in Sirte, Libya, from 8 to 9 September 1999. Their positive response had been unprecedented since the establishment of the OAU. They all participated in the summit, with the exception of Somalia, which has no central government. Thirty-nine heads of State and four Prime Ministers were at the forefront of the participants. Some of the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity were also at the summit, as well as former OAU Secretaries-General. The summit, which is a historic event in its own right, concluded with the adoption of the Sirte Declaration establishing an African Union and its political, economic and legislative institutions. Africa is now determined, more than ever before, to surmount all the negative aspects of its present realities and to move forward towards its future, full of hopes and aspirations, counting basically on its own resources, capabilities and the endeavours of its sons.

The Palestinian issue has not been settled yet, simply because the essence of the problem is being ignored: Palestine is still occupied. Its people are still scattered all over the globe as refugees, replaced by immigrants from all over the world. Unless an end is put to all this, and unless the Palestinian people are given their right to return to their homeland, neither peace nor security will be achieved in the Arab East region. The occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights must also be totally ended, as well as the occupation of southern Lebanon, in implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

We demand the immediate lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq, and we emphasize the importance of preserving its unity and territorial integrity, respect for its sovereignty, non-intervention in its internal affairs and ending the ongoing military aggression against it.

In order for the world to live in peace and security, it must be freed from the nuclear horror that threatens all peoples. Elimination of nuclear arsenals and all other weapons of mass destruction must have priority, and all efforts to achieve disarmament, at both regional and international levels, must be concentrated on realizing this goal. Unless those who currently possess such weapons get rid of them, there will always be those who strive to possess them. Efforts aimed at the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will be futile unless the nuclear Powers take practical steps that would demonstrate their serious commitment to the undertakings they have made. These two tracks must move together or stop together. We have no other choice.

The Arab region is subject to the threat of nuclear weapons possessed by Tel Aviv. These weapons constitute a permanent threat to the people of the region and to neighbouring areas, and unless these weapons are eliminated, all efforts to prevent their proliferation in the region will be unsuccessful.

Libya is the southern Mediterranean country with the longest coast. Therefore, we have a vital interest in making the Mediterranean a Sea of peace and cooperation for the benefit of all peoples of this basin. This goal can be achieved only if foreign military bases and fleets are removed from the area, as they are a source of constant danger to all Mediterranean peoples.

Several countries, including my own, are still trying to overcome the thorny problem of landmines that were planted in by the belligerent Powers during the World Wars. These landmines have caused damage, losses and tragedies of untold magnitude, both human and material. Vast areas of Libya are covered by millions of land mines deployed by the Allies and the Axis Powers during the Second World War. We hold those Powers responsible for what they have inflicted upon our people as a result of these landmines, and we reiterate our demand that the States responsible implement the resolutions of the General Assembly adopted in this regard, through the payment of compensation to the affected countries and peoples and the removal of these landmines.

The revolution of 1969 allowed Libya to achieve its true and complete independence. By driving the foreign military forces and bases from its soil, my country liberated its policies and decision-making capabilities. For these reasons, Libya has since then been the target of ongoing hostile media campaigns aimed at distorting our policies and tarnishing our international image. Our support for and solidarity with liberation movements have been portrayed as support for terrorism. Our standing by the side of the oppressed and the downtrodden and our assistance to help them liberate their countries and their resources and defend their own interests have been considered interference in the internal affairs of others.

There have also been clandestine campaigns that have sought to assassinate political leaders, in particular the leader of our revolution, Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, who has been targeted several times. Both air force and naval campaigns have targeted Libya's territorial waters and the main cities of Tripoli and Benghazi. As a result, dozens of martyrs were killed and many times as many were wounded — in addition to extensive loss of and damage to property. The main objective of these raids was once again to murder our brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi, whose home, office and tent were destroyed during these raids.

Economic pressure has been used against Libya. Unilateral boycotts and embargoes were followed by bilateral and collective embargoes, then by the internationalization of these embargoes after the Security Council had become hostage to the will of the powerful since the collapse of the international balance of power. This was particularly the case during the first years of the "era of frenzy", as Mr. Kofi Annan called it in a report to the General Assembly.

Why and how was the international "boycott" — as opposed to international "sanctions" — imposed? I call it a boycott and not sanctions because a sanction is a form of punishment for a definitively proven action, a punishment decreed after a final sentence has been pronounced by a competent court that has the jurisdiction to condemn the action in question. But no proof or evidence was presented to the Security Council that Libya, or even the two Libyan suspects, had actually committed any action that led to the crash of Pan Am flight 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie. Nevertheless, the sanctions resolutions were issued in the name of so-called international legitimacy, a legitimacy that is both wrong and wronged. This is wrong because resolutions are adopted in the name of the Security Council; the Security Council is wronged because it is forced to issue resolutions under political and economic pressures and threats. The relevant resolutions were adopted on the basis of suspicions regarding just two Libyan citizens — yet the sanctions targeted the entire population of Libya. This was a form of collective punishment against an entire people on the basis of a mere suspicion that had not been fully investigated. This punishment was imposed without a trial and obviously without any conviction in a court of law. So much indeed for legitimacy. In fact, how legitimate could this be during the years of frenzy?

The conclusions — or cinematic fantasies — regarding the suspicions were refuted at the time. Malta conducted an official investigation, the findings of which demonstrated that not one unaccompanied suitcase was loaded onto the flight from Malta to Frankfurt. For their part, the Frankfurt authorities investigated the matter and reached the conclusion that not one unaccompanied suitcase had arrived at their airport from Malta, nor had left it for London. What then, is the origin or basis of this suspicion?

I would like to briefly remind the Assembly that from the first moment that the accusation was broadcast by the media, and before the matter was even presented to the Security Council, Libya had done the following. First, we had requested the other party to provide the judiciary authorities in Libya with its findings so that these authorities could commence their investigations accordingly. Alternatively, we proposed that that party send investigators to Libya to participate in the investigation. We proposed sending Libyan judges to review the case file. We also proposed that an investigation be conducted by a neutral party or parties, or by the United Nations. All these requests were refused.

Secondly, we requested the application of article 14 of the Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation or the assignment of this matter to the International Court of Justice. All these requests and proposals were also refused.

Then, on 27 February 1998, the International Court of Justice issued two rulings in favour of Libya, confirming its jurisdiction over the case under the Montreal Convention. The Non-Aligned Movement — at a meeting of its Foreign Ministers in Cartagena, Colombia, from 18 to 20 May 1998 — made a recommendation to the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Durban, South Africa, that the sanctions imposed on Libya be lifted if the other party to the dispute did not agree to suspend the sanctions at the next review of the Security Council, which had been set for July 1998. At the Organization of African Unity summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, held on 10 June 1998, that organization declared that its members would no longer comply with the Security Council sanctions if the other party continued to reject any of the options proposed by international organizations to resolve the conflict. Faced with all these developments, the other party had only two options left: either to accept a trial in a third country, or for the international community to immediately lift the sanctions without having recourse to

the Security Council. Such a situation would have threatened the authority of the Security Council — or, more accurately, it would have threatened the authority of those who influence the Security Council — this latter being in the Council's view — a much more serious matter.

A further legal complication was the possibility that the General Assembly would be presented with a constitutional dilemma, especially after the issuance of the two rulings of the International Court of Justice — the highest judicial institution of the United Nations. It was the Security Council versus the International Court of Justice. We could present the case to the General Assembly at any time. The other party therefore had no option, and reluctantly, accepted, hoping to gain time. But then it returned to its main objective vis-à-vis Libya. It declared its acceptance of a trial in a third country and presented, as always, a badly written draft resolution to the Security Council, along with other draft resolutions imposed on the Council by means that are well known to all, especially to the Council's members.

Once again, most Security Council members supported Libya, and once again the international community reiterated its strong support for Libya in letters that reflected the will of the overwhelming majority of the international community. These letters are all official documents of the Security Council.

But in all fairness, and to state the truth, from which we have never deviated, I will say that the Government of the United Kingdom has reacted seriously to the Libyan proposal, expressing its willingness to refer the whole question to none other than a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands. We state the truth in our own interest and in the interest of others.

The rest is well known to all delegations. On 5 April 1999, the two suspects arrived of their own free will in the Netherlands, accompanied by Mr. Hans Corell, the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs.

But has the other party fulfilled its obligations? Has it shown respect for the resolutions of the Security Council? The answer is no. In fact, the other party prevented the adoption of a resolution by the Security Council to suspend the sanctions and agreed only to a press release. Once again, under pressure from the Non-Aligned Movement members of the Security Council and from the other Council members, and after several letters were submitted by the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League to the Security Council and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the other party accepted, unwillingly, the text of a presidential statement for the suspension of the embargo.

Three months after the sanctions were suspended, on 30 June 1999, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council in document S/1999/726 pursuant to paragraph 16 of resolution 883 (1993) and paragraph 8 of resolution 1192 (1998), which requested him to report to the Security Council within 90 days on compliance by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya with the remaining provisions of resolutions 731 (1992) and 748 (1992). On 9 July 1999, the Security Council considered the Secretary-General's report, but was unable to adopt a resolution that would have lifted the sanctions imposed on Libya, because of the intransigence of one State, the United States, which is a party to the dispute. That State even threatened to use the veto. This, in fact, can only be seen as reneging on previous commitments made by the Security Council in paragraph 16 of its resolution 883 (1993) and paragraph 8 of its resolution 1192 (1998). Moreover, it ignores the Secretary-General's report, whose contents lead to only one conclusion: that Libya has fulfilled all its obligations under Security Council resolutions.

What justification, if any, does the United States have for using the veto to prevent the Security Council from adopting a resolution to lift the unjust sanctions on Libya? First, the United States has reiterated the accusation it has made before and since the fabrication of the Lockerbie case: that Libya supports terrorism. The United States has been repeating that allegation ever since we evicted it from Libya's military bases and harbours, ended its monopoly on our oil, and liberated our country from colonialism. That is why the United States still accuses us of terrorism. The Secretary-General's report categorically refutes this claim. Members may refer to paragraphs 29 to 34 of the report and to other pages in order to ascertain the baseless nature of this accusation. Moreover, one can also cite reports issued by the American State Department and statements made by present and former officials of American Administrations that all point to the fact that such claims can no longer be made.

Libya is a victim of American terrorism, not vice versa. It is the United States of America that committed all the acts of aggression that we have previously referred

to. It is the United States that sheltered, financed, trained and armed terrorists and transported them to Libya to commit acts of terrorism in 1984 and afterwards. Those who continue to shelter terrorists wanted by other countries are not in a position to refer to others by descriptions that apply only to themselves. Libya has stood by liberation movements, particularly in Africa. This is a legitimate cause, not support for terrorism.

The second justification is that Libya has to cooperate with the Scottish court in the Netherlands. This is meaningless, since Libya has undertaken to cooperate with the court, as the Secretary-General's report has shown. Furthermore, this matter has been discussed by the judiciary authorities of the three countries in the presence of Mr. Corell. The Security Council, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 1192 (1998), decided that all States, not Libya alone, shall cooperate with the court. The text is available; we can look it up if there is any doubt. Since all parties are called upon to cooperate, how can this argument be used to prevent the Security Council from acting in accordance with its obligations by lifting the embargo on Libya? This matter falls under the competence of the International Court of Justice and the Scottish court, with which our judiciary authorities are cooperating. It is blatant interference when a member of the Security Council tries to influence the work of these courts, which are independent institutions that deserve the respect not only of Libya, but of all others as well.

The third justification is even harder to swallow. It is the demand that Libya compensate the families of the victims. How can this be done when the court has yet to sit? It will not hold its first session until 4 February 2000 and the laws state that the suspect is innocent until proven guilty. When we raised this issue, it was suggested that we settle out of court. Why out of court? Why then is the court in the Netherlands? We were told that these are American laws. American laws apply to United States citizens, not to Libyan citizens. The Security Council and the General Assembly reiterated last year and the year before that national laws cannot be applied beyond national borders. This logic of power should be used only to uphold the law. At the joint meeting, the Secretary-General himself was surprised to hear this proposal before the court was in session. They reiterated it. He asked them how it could be done. They said that the court would hand down a sentence. He pointed out that it had not yet done so and that, if it did, Libya would be committed to respecting it. How could they possibly make such a request when the suspects have not been found guilty? We are trying to prove their innocence and our country's. How can we be asked to pay compensation when a ruling has not yet been issued? This is yet another way of interfering in the internal affairs of the Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands.

Who will compensate Libya for the damages it has sustained in excess of $70 billion after seven years of unjustified sanctions and embargoes? Who will compensate us? The United Nations? Will the Member States compensate Libya for something they have not done? Let us be logical and work within the law on the basic principles of justice. Since we have agreed to the establishment of the court, let us allow the court to carry out its responsibilities.

Libya's fulfilment of its obligations has also been underlined in the Secretary-General's report, in the decisions of the thirty-fifth African Summit held in Algeria last July, in the decisions of the Arab League this September and in the decisions of the Ministerial Council of the Non-Aligned Movement a week ago. All these decisions call for the immediate and complete lifting of the sanctions. In this, they join the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Preventing the Security Council from adopting an overdue resolution lifting sanctions that should not have been imposed in the first place will threaten the Council's credibility and ability to honour its obligations. It will also reinforce the Security Council's failure to act in compliance with the will of the majority of the United Nations Member States and in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, as stated in Article 24. The will of one State cannot represent the will of the entire international community.

My country requests one thing: that the Security Council speedily adopt a decision lifting all the sanctions imposed on Libya. We demand that the case not be allowed to be politicized after the matter has taken its legal course. The case should be left entirely to the Scottish court in the Netherlands, without any interference from any political entity, including the Security Council. If the Security Council continues to be prevented from adopting such a decision, my country will take all necessary steps to guarantee fairness, including raising a constitutional dilemma between the highest and most important judiciary organ, the International Court of Justice, and the Security Council. We will raise it before the General Assembly in order to have a decision taken.

The President: I call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to convey to you, Sir, the assurances of my greatest esteem on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Yemen, I congratulate you on your assumption of this high office. We are certain that under your distinguished and capable leadership the work of the General Assembly will be crowned with success.

The democratic process in our world today is undergoing real expansion and is receiving the attention of all nations, whatever their creeds, races or regimes. It is further consolidated by being increasingly linked to human rights, in particular the rights to sustainable development, global knowledge, equality, justice, peace and stability.

The Republic of Yemen has linked itself in complete unity to the democratic process and has made it a continuous process towards comprehensive development. Both State and society are tirelessly struggling to make democracy in our country a firm and established system, evolving daily in order to ultimately form an integral system for the conduct of political, social and economic life.

On 23 September 1999, the Republic of Yemen, for the first time in its history, held free and direct elections for the presidency of the Republic, reflecting the credibility of the country's political regime and its constitutional commitments requiring the holding of direct elections for the presidency for five-year terms. This is proof that democracy in Yemen has become established as a firmly rooted principle and a unique and unrestricted option for achieving a peaceful change of government respect for human rights, and for enhancing people's role and participation in sustainable development and cultural progress.

Democracy in Yemen appeared in its highest form in the direct presidential elections, which reflected the free will of the people and the need for development and stability. The results of the direct secret ballot showed participation in all parts of the country by 66 per cent of all registered voters. The President-elect of the Republic of Yemen for the forthcoming term, Ali Abdullah Saleh, obtained 96 per cent of the votes. A new term and a new era will begin on 5 October this year, when the directly elected President will take the constitutional oath before the Yemeni Chamber of Deputies.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The wish of the people to achieve democratic progress reflects their need for stability and for an end to states of emergency in their lives. This goes hand in hand with their desire for a future that embodies radical change in the economic, social and cultural fields. It also requires serious practical action on the part of Governments and international and regional organizations to support development in emerging democracies, and to supply them with means of growth and the transfer of know-how. Sustainable development would then accompany and safeguard democracy, and the linkage between development and democracy would be a condition for progress and a motivating force for cooperation and human integration among all nations of the world.

Sixteen States convened the Forum on Emerging Democracies in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, and issued an important instrument called the Sana'a Declaration, with a view to intensifying the concepts, framework and applications of the democratic process in real life, and to achieving broad popular participation and the affirmation of human rights in those countries.

I wish to reaffirm here the announcement of President Ali Abdullah Saleh that the Republic of Yemen would like to host the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies to be held in Asia in 2003.

Our world today is witnessing profound changes that essentially represent the remnants of the cold war and that are, at the same time, new harbingers of hope that forthcoming changes will be in the interest of peace, economic progress and development, and that the people, political leaders and intellectuals have absorbed the lessons to be derived from ideological and racial conflicts, power politics and their tragic clashes. The only way to prepare the way for peace and stability is through the language of dialogue, the rule of law, stable relationships and the absence of fear, doubt and uncertainty. Dialogue will for ever remain the only way to extinguish fires, spread the spirit of tolerance and coexistence and promote the values of cooperation, solidarity and integration among all active forces and actors in the cause of peace.

The position of the Republic of Yemen regarding world events consists of our commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, non-use or threat of force in the settlement of disputes and peaceful negotiations and dialogue in the settlement of all issues, including border issues between States on a no-fault basis.

As a member of the international family and an active participant in regional organizations, Yemen unequivocally affirms its sincere desire to contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf, the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean. The Republic of Yemen calls upon all States and peoples to continue their sincere and diligent efforts to achieve tangible progress in the ongoing dialogue between all parties concerned in these regions. The desired goal is to arrive at mutual understanding, balanced relationships and firm bases for the achievement of coexistence and harmony among States and peoples, the consolidation of peace and the securing of the necessary conditions for development and cooperation.

The Republic of Yemen demonstrated in practice the credibility of its positions of principle, its respect for international law, its wholehearted desire for stability and peace in the region and its awareness of the importance of such peace for international economic, commercial and maritime relations. Yemen proved that when it accepted unconditionally the decision of the arbitration tribunal regarding the sovereignty dispute over the Yemeni island of Greater Hanish, which lies in the Red Sea between Yemen and the neighbouring State of Eritrea, thereby furnishing a prime example of how peaceful solutions to differences and disputes between States can be achieved by international arbitration.

We hope that the island-related dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be settled peacefully in accordance with internationally recognized principles and rules relating to the settlement of such disputes, and in keeping with the desire to achieve peace, stability, development and cooperation in our region.

In accordance with these firm premises and guidelines, the Republic of Yemen will remain faithful to the principle of the rejection of violence and the combating of terrorism in all its forms, whatever its motives and sources, and regardless of whether it involves individuals, groups or States. Our country is combating this phenomenon with all its might. It believes that terrorism has become a worldwide phenomenon meriting investigation at the international level and the creation of integrated mechanisms and rules to contain it and to counter its effects, with a view to ultimately eliminating it.

The Assembly might agree with me that there is now an urgent need to review the policy of imposing international embargoes and sanctions. Experience has demonstrated their ineffectiveness in achieving the goals and purposes for which they were adopted and the tremendous harm they have visited upon people, not political regimes, especially the middle and lower strata of the population and vulnerable social sectors such as children, women and the elderly.

The situation in Iraq attests to this. The need for a total and final lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has also become self-evident, after recent developments and the Libyan leadership's compliance with the Security Council resolutions concerning the Lockerbie affair. We also call for the lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Sudan, which is currently holding an internal democratic dialogue for the achievement of unity and national concord.

Wars and clashes result only in human tragedies, in the form of displacement, imprisonment, forcible detention and flight from war zones in search of refuge and safe havens. In this context, my country emphasizes the need to deal in a humane and civilized manner with the question of prisoners, the missing and those who are forced into hiding as a result of wars, conflicts and clashes of all kinds.

In this regard, we have great hope that the issue of Kuwaiti and other prisoners will meet with a humane and objective solution that will help to create an atmosphere conducive to reconciliation and to the achievement of harmony, peace and stability in the region.

It is known that societies that host refugees fleeing from areas of war and oppression bear heavy burdens and sustain tragic consequences, and that their peoples face serious environmental and health hazards. Those societies also face considerable economic and financial hardships as a result of hosting refugees. It is indeed regrettable that the humanitarian work done for refugees by certain countries should have disastrous, tragic results for those countries. This is what is happening today in the Republic of Yemen as a result of the steadily increasing

daily influx of refugees from the Horn of Africa, which is ablaze with regional and civil wars and local dissension.

The Republic of Yemen calls upon the international community to assume its responsibility with regard to this humanitarian issue, which weighs heavily on the Yemeni State and society, by increased efforts on the part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and a more concerted international alliance among all donor countries able to provide emergency and long-term assistance. Allowing the persistence of such inhumane phenomena and conditions reflects a tragic deterioration in human rights and an alarming regression in the values of civilized nations. We undoubtedly need to develop mechanisms and devise the necessary means for coping with such situations. This is the very essence and substance of the work of the United Nations.

At the same time, we wish to emphasize that the time has come for renewed solidarity and efforts on the part of the United Nations, the international community and all parties concerned with a view to finding practical solutions to the situation in Somalia that will help restore the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia and bring security and stability to the region.

The peoples of the world seek a peace that is based on justice, equality, respect for human rights and the absence of tyranny, abuse and double standards. Accordingly, the Republic of Yemen, which has supported and given its blessing to the efforts towards a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, believes that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace must be based on the restoration of all legitimate rights to the Palestinian people, first and foremost of which is its right to establish its independent State on its national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital, and likewise the restoration of Israeli-occupied territories to the Syrian and the Lebanese peoples.

At a time when we are positively and with renewed optimism discussing the peace process in the region, Israel must realize that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is a genuine goal for the people of the area. Furthermore, it is a regional, international humanitarian goal that will help open a new page in the life and relations between peoples and help end the tragedies of the past. It will hopefully assist in overcoming all rancour and grudges and in providing opportunities for tolerance between creeds, cultures and races. All this would constitute a genuine starting point for stability, trust and mutual understanding among the States and peoples of the region.

As we approach the end of the second millennium, we are confronted with a reality exemplified in the increased speed and movement of political, economic and social variables, whose ramifications and relationship with other contrasting factors are becoming increasingly more complex, in terms of time and space.

We are all therefore called upon to cooperate and to respond responsibly for the creation of a healthy climate for the building of a new world order based on justice, freedom of choice, tolerance and genuine partnership in all governmental and non-governmental activities at the regional and international levels. The ultimate goal is to permanently ensure a balance of interests and a sense of involvement in all that is humane and noble and, in concrete terms, in a productive and useful life for all mankind.

Since one of our primary goals is the reform of the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council and the international institutions, we are giving this goal our full attention and support. At the same time, we commend the Secretary-General for the initiatives and measures he has taken towards the goal of reforming the United Nations, its mechanisms and its methods of work, which would broaden democratic practices and achieve transparency of work and effectiveness of participation.

In this context, we reaffirm our welcome and support for the Open-ended Working Group established for this purpose. We call for the continuation and early completion of its work, taking into full account the importance of a full understanding of the essential variables in international relations in recent years.

I reiterate my esteem for the President of the Assembly, and I thank all those participating in the current session. May peace and God's mercy and blessing be upon you.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Saint Lucia, His Excellency The Honourable George Odlum.

Mr. Odlum (Saint Lucia): As the curtain falls on the twentieth century, this time-honoured institution, the United Nations, rejoices in the presence of two distinguished Africans at the helm. The outstanding freedom fighter of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab occupies our presidential perch, while our principled, purposeful and persuasive Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, like the proverbial Ol' Man River, keeps rolling

along, relentlessly serene in his pursuit of world peace and human development. If Africa is the last impression of the twentieth century, poetic justice demands that it must be our first preoccupation in the twenty-first century. This international forum must readjust the balance over centuries. We must pay for our dereliction of duty over Rwanda and the Congo. We must remove the remaining vestige of apartheid, and we must make a quantum leap in eliminating poverty and disease by addressing the causes of poverty.

The Caribbean has always leapt over the restrictions of size and resources to embrace the global vision of a liberated world, and the liberation of Africa plays a seminal role in this process. Caribbean thinkers such as Padmore, C. L. R. James, Professor Arthur Lewis, Dr. Eric Williams and Dr. Walter Rodney have all sought to sensitize the world to the catalytic role which Africa must play in global development.

We recognize, however, that an essential condition for fulfilling this role must be the overcoming of the underdevelopment that plagues that continent. But if we are to progress in that direction, we must first boldly admit that disunity among the countries of Africa has much to do with this condition. In an era when other geographic regions and continents have been uniting for economic advancement, the African continent remains divided. The time has come, therefore, for the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to go further than just making declarations of unity. Pan-Africanism must not continue to remain stunted, as it was at the threshold of the sixties. African leaders and statesmen must show the resolve and the unwavering character of Nelson Mandela, and give African children, born and unborn, hope in the future of Africa.

In this regard, the results of the recent Algiers summit of the OAU are therefore most welcome, for the summit has demonstrated a new sense of urgency and commitment on the part of the new leaders of Africa. The United Nations must not fail to support this progressive development. For our part, Saint Lucia, mindful of the African heritage of our people, will exhort our Caribbean colleagues to consider applying for associate status with the OAU and to consolidate further our solidarity in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) forum.

Our call for unity is not being sent only to our brothers in Africa. It goes out also to all developing countries, be they in the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia or elsewhere. If we in the developing world are to have a better future in the new millennium, if we are to obtain any benefits from the new international systems that are evolving around us, we cannot depend only on the goodwill of the countries of the developed world. There must be unity of action and purpose among us; there must be an end to the in-fighting, the skirmishes, and the wars between us. The South-South Summit in Havana next year will provide an excellent opportunity for cementing solidarity on issues of common concern and deciding on a forward-looking agenda for the development of our people.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, we the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) can be proud of the 25-year integration movement in which we have been engaged. We are in the process of completing arrangements for the creation of a single market and economy and for the establishment of a Caribbean court of justice that will be the final appellate court for CARICOM member countries. But, certainly, we must recognize that while we have made progress, we have not gone far enough. In October, the heads of Government of the Caribbean Community will meet in a special session in Trinidad and Tobago to consider the future governance of the Caribbean Community. We urge the leaders of CARICOM, in what will be their final meeting of the century, to take decisions on the future of CARICOM that will erase from the memories of West Indian people all the hurt, all the pain, all the disappointments of our failed attempts at closer political union during this century. Let the occasion for their October meeting be the springboard that catapults West Indians into what will truly be a new era. Let our people enter the new millennium with a CARICOM that will be fully integrated, economically and politically.

We can extend this tableau to embrace the Non-Self-Governing Territories of our region. My Government was pleased to have hosted, in May of this year, the annual United Nations seminar of the Special Committee on Decolonization to review the economic, political and constitutional developments in the remaining small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. This highly successful seminar brought together representatives from Governments and non-governmental organizations and experts from the Caribbean and Pacific regions. This important activity resulted in the adoption by the Special Committee of targeted recommendations in the furtherance of the decolonization of these Territories. To this end, we strongly support a second decade on decolonization to focus on the socio-economic, political and constitutional development of the remaining small

island Territories, which are integral components of both the Caribbean and the Pacific regions.

But the realization of these regional goals turns on the full emergence of Cuba as a vital and creative force in the integration and development of the Caribbean. This emergence is frustrated by the inability of the United Nations to harness the political will to remove the inhumane sanctions imposed by the United States on the Cuban people, despite the successive overwhelming votes religiously taken every year in the Assembly. At the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, 157 countries voted in favour of resolution 53/4 to end the economic embargo against Cuba. The totally callous disregard for the cumulative will of the Assembly is the touchstone which characterizes the relationship between the super-Power leviathan and the 187 Lilliputian nations that talk and vote in this forum. Where is the democracy of which we speak? Where is the mutual respect for sovereign nations? Where is the humanity?

The events in Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor have drawn serious lessons for the international community. The spectre of an effete United Nations looking on helplessly while Member nations intervene unilaterally is a nightmare on the eve of the new millennium. It is for this reason that Saint Lucia strongly supports the call by Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the United Nations to be empowered to take action, whether militarily or otherwise, to stop crimes against humanity.

Saint Lucia remains concerned at the systematic weakening and marginalization of the United Nations. In this regard, attention is drawn to its operational activities and its development programmes, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We call on donor countries to reconsider the effects of the budget cuts on regional and country programmes.

We need a United Nations that not only carries out its peacekeeping and humanitarian capacities, but one that also plays a central role in the governance of globalization and trade liberalization to ensure that globalization is about development.

Our common humanity must demonstrate itself in our prompt response to natural disasters in each other's countries. The people of Taiwan have been the most recent victims of devastating earthquakes, which claimed the lives of thousands of innocent people. We commiserate with them. It is at such critical moments that the spirit of brotherhood must emerge. There was a surge of hope at the news that the People's Republic of China had pledged assistance to the Taiwanese across the Taiwan Strait. Let us hope that the Creator is working in a mysterious way to bring about the peaceful and mutually agreeable reunification of the Chinese people on this occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of China.

Our own island State of Montserrat continues to struggle to recover from the destruction caused by volcanic eruptions. Yet the international community continues to exclude this small island from concessional assistance on the basis of its high gross national product per capita, calculated from its small population and inflows of assistance, mainly from the United Kingdom. The United Nations, in particular the Committee for Development Policy, must take the lead role in the revision of the criteria for concessional assistance to include vulnerabilities and qualitative data including openness of the economy and economic shocks. The sustainable development of small developing countries will remain a dream unless these fundamental structural and systemic biases are addressed.

Saint Lucia is particularly concerned about the exclusion of transnational corporations from the rules of engagement the World Trade Organization (WTO) sets for trade, since a large percentage of the financing for our development comes from trade in one commodity. Saint Lucia will continue to call for an integrated approach to the consideration of trade and finance in the context of the upcoming conference on financing for development and for the participation of all actors, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, under the leadership of the United Nations.

The dispute over the arrangements for the marketing of bananas has been particularly distasteful. People in member countries of the European Union are being punished through sanctions by the United States for the support of their Governments for the banana marketing regime. That country continues to promote the interests of its multinational companies involved in the banana trade at the expense of smaller economies. There are at the moment proposals on the table designed to put in place a new WTO-compatible system for the marketing of bananas in Europe. All parties, particularly producing countries, are of the view that a tariff rate quota system is the most viable regime for all concerned. A continuation of the tariff rate quota is essential for ensuring that the market continues to generate adequate prices.

Yet the United States transnationals engaged in the industry are instead promoting a simple or linear tariff mechanism that will have disastrous effects for Caribbean producers. Saint Lucia and other ACP countries have expressed dissatisfaction with this recommendation. We again implore all European Union member States to revisit this choice and to consider its implications for Saint Lucia and other ACP countries. We are inherently unequal trading partners, and the WTO should not subject small economies to liberalization and unbridled competition on an equal footing with economies and corporations far more advanced than they are and expect them to survive. Saint Lucia again calls on the international community, including the WTO, to differentiate between trading partners and promote fair trade through special and differential treatment, not on a voluntary basis, but as a contractual obligation.

Saint Lucia has been in the forefront of the fight for the survival of small island States. To quote the words of the President of the United States in his recent address to the Assembly,

> "We must refuse to accept a future in which one part of humanity lives on the cutting edge of a new economy, while the other lives at the knife edge of survival" (*A/54/PV.6*).

Globalization has left us on the knife edge of survival. We are thankful to Europe for empathizing with our vulnerabilities, and we regret that they have attracted the wrath of sanctions for their pains. Between the rhetoric and the reality lies the gaping wound of disillusion and despair. President Clinton rightly posed the question:

> "Will globalism bring shared prosperity, or will it make the desperate of the world even more desperate?" (*supra*).

Saint Lucia can confidently attest to the truth that the small States and the developing world are desperate, and that their desperation is compounded by the fact that the global preoccupation with money and markets is fast destroying the values and sacred norms in our respective countries.

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay".
>
> (Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*)

The decadence and moral turpitude that has taken over our paradise of an island is unbelievable. The conspiracy that threatens to decimate our bananas has left us with tourism as a strategy for diversification. The twin monsters of drugs and crime promise to overrun us, and the filth that spews from cable television pours into our homes. Some of these homes are nothing more than vile little hovels whose inhabitants are sustained at night by religion and unemployed by day. The decay is all-pervasive, and women from nearby territories are imported to ply their sordid trade in strip-tease joints.

We have lost our innocence; this is the surest legacy that globalization has visited upon us. We cannot be swayed by the rhetoric of partnership when the relentless logic of globalization is geared to decimate, to marginalize and to eliminate. The developing world must focus closely on the Seattle Round and ensure that the wide sweep of liberalization and open markets does not wash us away. If the dogmatism and inflexibility of powerful States threaten our survival, then we must band together in a "Trade Union of the Poor" to seek justice and humanity. No poison is a necessary drink, and we cannot be expected to swallow globalization's cup of hemlock for the greater glory of the shapers of the new millennium. We want a new millennium shaped by all Member States, addressing the needs and interests of all, and beneficial to all.

We share our apprehension with this body. We will work in the embrace of its wise Charter, but we would describe globalization in the words of the Irish poet William Butler Yeats:

> "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"
>
> (*The Second Coming*)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Minister for External Relations of the Sudan, His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab the sincere congratulations of my delegation on his election to the presidency of this session. We are confident that his well-known experience and abilities will lead this session to a successful conclusion. We assure him of the full cooperation of our delegation to achieve that objective.

We also wish to express our appreciation to his predecessor for his valuable efforts, which led to the success of the previous session. By the same token, our appreciation also goes to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-

General of the United Nations, for his efforts at the helm of the Organization.

I also wish to welcome our newest Members — the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. President, heeding your appeal to be very brief, I will not touch on all the points detailed in my statement before the Assembly, and I ask that the edited version be placed on record.

Since I last spoke before the Assembly one year ago, the Sudan has witnessed numerous developments in the political, economic and social fields. A permanent constitution was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the people in a popular and free referendum. This constitution guarantees for the Sudanese people all political and civil freedoms and rights, including the right to form political parties and social and cultural organizations.

Despite the difficulties faced by Sudan, as a result of both the war and natural disasters, it has been able, through its own efforts, to restructure its economy to meet the requirements of the free market. All this took place in the near-total absence of foreign aid. The Sudan has also started to exploit its natural resources, both agricultural and mineral, in particular oil, which we started exporting on 30 August last. Oil revenues will contribute to strengthening national efforts for socio-economic development.

In the economic field, these endeavours have contributed to reversing a number of the short-term negative effects of the economic liberalization policies. These reform measures have so far helped to achieve an 8 per cent total growth rate and to reduce the rate of inflation to 13 per cent, and have led the International Monetary Fund to commend this remarkable achievement. In order to alleviate the economic burdens resulting from economic reform policies, our Government has adopted a number of measures to assist the more vulnerable groups and low-income citizens through social assistance funds, the provision of "soft" loans and the establishment of small productive projects for youth and women.

In the search for peace in southern Sudan, the Government accepted the Declaration of Principles as a basis for its negotiations with the rebels within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). It also declared a partial ceasefire, as it had repeatedly done, in order to ensure the delivery of relief assistance to its citizens affected by the war. Subsequently, we came to the conclusion that the most effective way to show our seriousness about arriving at a genuine and lasting solution to this humanitarian tragedy was to ensure the cessation of all hostilities. The Government therefore took its recent initiative to establish a general and comprehensive ceasefire while continuing the negotiations through IGAD, with the assistance of our IGAD partners. However, those efforts by my Government were met by prevarication and were not taken seriously by the other side. The failure of the rebel movement to accept a comprehensive ceasefire is proof of its lack of interest and seriousness in searching for a solution to the problem, which has enriched its leaders at the expense of the Sudanese people in general and of our southern citizens in particular.

The Sudan looks forward to a more effective role by IGAD, the partners of IGAD and the Egyptian and Libyan conciliation initiative, in support of the peace efforts. The call for a comprehensive ceasefire has also been endorsed by the United Nations and the international community. We are grateful for and appreciate that support. Yet the process needs to be given further impetus and support if an environment conducive to the establishment of peace is to be created and all the obstacles in its way are to be removed.

In this context, we call upon the international community to take punitive measures against the rebel Garang similar to those taken against Savimbi in Angola, in order to persuade him to join the peace effort. We also call for continued support for the Government initiative aimed at achieving a comprehensive ceasefire, through bringing pressure to bear on the rebel movement to accept that initiative and to show some seriousness in the negotiations in order to find a solution to the problem. Furthermore, demands must continue to be made for the handing over of the remains of the four relief workers murdered by the movement last April.

With regard to the practices of the rebel movement, I should like to speak about developments in the humanitarian situation, which continues to deteriorate in the south of the country despite relative improvements in Bahr el-Ghazal and other areas. From this rostrum, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the countries and organizations that continue to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to those affected in the Sudan, whether directly or through Operation Lifeline Sudan. We believe that there is a need for the gradual transition from relief to development in the areas that

enjoy stability, security and peace now that the Khartoum peace agreement and the Fashoda accord have been signed.

We call upon the donor countries and organizations to make contributions to the consolidated appeal for the Sudan for 1999, in view of the noticeable decline in its resources, which last June amounted to only 31 per cent of requirements. We also emphasize that it is important not to allow political posturing to get in the way of humanitarian and relief work. There is also a need to avoid selectivity in dealing with humanitarian issues, which affect the lives of peoples and individuals.

The Sudan would like to inform the Assembly of its full commitment to a general and comprehensive ceasefire throughout southern Sudan for humanitarian reasons and as a means of paving the way for peace negotiations. We hope that the other party will respond positively so that we can begin to take practical steps to disengage the forces and monitor the ceasefire. The Government will allocate a large part of its oil revenues for humanitarian and development needs in the south. It will also allocate part of this year's grain harvest for distribution by United Nations agencies to the needy population in the south. The war has continued for a long time, and we appreciate the role played by the international community in extending humanitarian assistance. That situation cannot go on forever; the one and only solution to the crisis is a peaceful one.

The conflicts in Africa have brought untold suffering and hardships, to the peoples of the continent. One of the greatest problems is that of the more than 8 million refugees who live under extremely difficult circumstances. In its search to put an end to the suffering of the refugees and to find radical solutions to the problem, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) decided to convene the first ministerial meeting of the committee on refugees and internally displaced persons. That important meeting was held last December in Khartoum with the active participation of the sisterly African States, the relevant United Nations bodies, the regional organizations concerned, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations. The meeting adopted the Khartoum Declaration, which contained an assessment of the problems facing refugees and displaced persons with a view to addressing the underlying causes of these problems and to establishing favourable conditions for the restoration of peace and stability in order to encourage the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes in safety and dignity. From this rostrum, we appeal to the international community and the relevant organizations to continue to provide support for the States affected by these problems so as to ensure the prompt and effective implementation of the Khartoum Declaration and its recommendations with regard to refugees and internally displaced persons.

We call for the renunciation of selectivity in dealing with the question of humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy at the international level. We also appeal to States to avoid politicizing these questions and using them as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of others. We are eager to see those lofty principles applied effectively while preserving the principle of the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of States. In this context, we should like to draw attention to the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations in the delivery of relief assistance to the affected population in the south, as well as to the recent visit of the United Nations mission to the Nuba Mountain region to assess the humanitarian needs there.

In his report on the work of the Organization and his opening statement before this session, the Secretary-General reflected the international concern about the expansion and intensification of civil wars and other conflicts in various regions and the human tragedies and physical and economic destruction that result from such wars. We share the Secretary-General's concern on this matter. We reaffirm the importance of maximizing collective efforts to eliminate the causes of conflicts before they erupt and of using all available means to put an end to them.

We believe, however, that any actions taken or means used must have the consent and agreement of the State concerned and must be within the framework of international laws and standards, particularly those of the United Nations Charter. In the absence of a transparent, democratic and just international order, moving outside that framework and calling for interference in the internal affairs of States will only lead to chaos and the hegemony of the powerful over the weak.

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the current Chairman of the OAU, summed up the fears and concerns of the small and weak States in this regard by saying that we remain very sensitive to any encroachment on our sovereignty, not only because it constitutes our last line of defence against the laws of an unjust world but because we do not participate effectively in the decision-making process in the Security Council or in the monitoring of the implementation of these decisions.

Modern history is full of examples of such unjust interpretation and application of laws and resolutions. I would like to highlight just one example: the unjust and unjustified attack by the United States on the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory and the inability of the Security Council to take a decision on Sudan's request to send a mission to investigate the American allegations concerning the factory.

The ideas put forward by the Secretary-General in his report require further consultations and consideration by the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies, with the participation of all Member States and within the framework of the Charter and international laws and norms.

Undoubtedly, the continued imbalance in international relations has strengthened the trend towards unilateral supremacy and double standards. This imbalance has had negative effects on international peace, security and stability. It has also created an unhealthy atmosphere which promotes the interests of certain States while ignoring, indeed belittling, the interests and rights of the weaker members of the international community. Hence, the Sudan has always supported the call for the establishment of a balanced and diverse international order, an order that respects the specific religious, historical and cultural characteristics of peoples and that protects their natural right to choose their own social, economic and political systems in harmony with their cultural attributes.

The fact that the Sudan is being targeted by the United States Administration is not open to question. Indeed, the United States Administration itself does not deny this. It has taken many measures aimed at destabilizing Sudan and its security, and has pursued a declared policy of isolating the Sudan through the provision of military assistance to some of its neighbours. It has consistently voted against the Sudan in the international financial institutions and has sponsored resolutions condemning and denouncing the Sudan at the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It has also attempted to smear the Sudan's image in the international arena. It has made baseless accusations against the Sudan, charging it with involvement in international terrorism and placing its name on its list of what it calls States sponsoring terrorism. Furthermore, the United States Administration imposed unilateral economic sanctions on the Sudan despite the international community's clear and declared position on such coercive economic measures. All these actions have been taken by the United States on the basis of totally false and unfounded allegations and accusations. The United States Administration has never been able to produce a single piece of evidence to prove its allegations.

The unjust United States actions and accusations against the Sudan culminated last year in the bombing and destruction of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum. A whole year has elapsed since I addressed the General Assembly from this rostrum about the flagrant aggression by the United States of America against that factory, which was privately owned and financed by the bank of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Has any action been taken since the Sudan explained to the international community the enormity of the mistake perpetrated by the United States against the Sudanese people, depriving them of a main source of medication for their innocent children and for the many refugees and displaced persons that are given shelter by the Sudan? The Sudan continues to demand and to expect justice and redress from the Security Council as the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Immediately after the bombing of the factory last August, Sudan requested the Security Council to send a mission to ascertain the facts regarding the factory's ownership and output, and to verify the allegations invoked by the United States to attempt to justify its aggression. The non-aligned countries, the Arab Group, the African Group and the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference all wrote letters to the Security Council supporting the Sudan's request. Most regrettably, the Council remained unable to act. The United States prevented the Council from discharging its most basic duty in this regard, namely to investigate the allegations that the United States used to try to justify its armed aggression.

Since I addressed the Assembly last year, dozens of articles and reports have been published in major United States newspapers. Numerous statements have been made by United States congressional officials and former Central Intelligence Agency experts, along with a number of academic studies by specialized institutes in the United States and other countries, all of which affirm that the Al-Shifa factory was a pharmaceutical factory producing human and veterinary medicines. They also affirm that the United States made a terrible mistake by destroying that factory, which had links to the United Nations: the Security Council had authorized the factory to export medicines to Iraq within the framework of the oil-for-food programme. The Sudan referred all these studies, articles and declarations to the Security Council. This year, the owner of the factory hired some of the best

known United States experts in the field of chemical weapons to examine the factory and ascertain the truth about its output. The experts took samples, which were examined in the most sophisticated and advanced laboratories in Europe and the United States. The conclusion was that the factory produced nothing other than medications for human and veterinary use. The Sudan also formed its own specialized scientific committee composed of university professors in the Sudan to examine the factory. The committee issued a report affirming once again that the United States allegations about the factory had no logical or scientific basis.

A most important development then followed: a decision by the United States Departments of Justice and of the Treasury to unfreeze the assets of the owner of the factory in the United States. That reaffirms that the justifications put forward by the United States for the bombing of the Al-Shifa factory were baseless. There is no physical evidence to prove them. Rather, they were based on misleading intelligence information. The United States allegations that the factory is owned by terrorist groups are also baseless and lack any supporting evidence or proof. The United States decision to unfreeze the assets of the factory's owner came after the United States Administration ascertained that he had no connection with terrorism. This in itself is clear and irrefutable proof of what Sudan has been saying before the international community all along.

When the matter was put before the Security Council last year and when the Sudan requested the dispatch of a fact-finding mission, the United States objected on the pretext that it would settle the question bilaterally with the Sudan. A whole year has elapsed and all we have received is more procrastination. This led me last August to send another letter to the President of the Security Council asking him again to dispatch a fact-finding mission. We appeal to the United Nations, as it represents all countries, big and small, to prove its impartiality and objectivity; we appeal to the Security Council to send a mission to uncover the facts about the destruction of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory. The United Nations should request the United States not to object to the dispatch of such mission if it is confident of the information and the causes that led it to bomb the factory.

The bombing of the pharmaceutical factory took the lives of a number of Sudanese. It deprived hundreds of workers of their livelihood. It also deprived the Sudanese people and the refugees from neighbouring countries of their main source of medication and vaccines. All this makes the international community wonder about the sincerity of the United States commitment to human rights. In their 1998 and 1999 ministerial declarations, the Group of 77 and China called for applying justice in this case in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. This act of aggression was a unilateral act unacceptable to the international community. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries condemned this act at its Durban Summit and at subsequent ministerial meetings.

Persisting in targeting the Sudan, the United States Administration recently appointed a special envoy for the Sudan with specific objectives and terms of reference. Sudan was not party to the choice of that envoy or to the definition of the objectives and terms of reference of his mission.

Clearly, the way in which the United States Administration chose this envoy reflects a condescending attitude and is an act of cultural arrogance inconsistent with the spirit of the United Nations Charter, which governs relations between States. At the time when the United States claims to be concerned with the problems of the Sudan, we find that it has blocked, to a large degree, all channels of bilateral contact. When announcing the appointment of the special envoy, the United States spokesman affirmed that his mandate would not include the bilateral aspect of relations between the two countries. Here we would like to pose a question: how could a State appoint an envoy to another State without having his task include their bilateral relations? This is indeed bizarre, since the basic disagreements between us and the United States are of a bilateral nature. Such disagreements led the United States to use force to destroy a pharmaceutical factory, and then it refused international arbitration in the matter. It is also bizarre that the United States Administration has given its envoy to the Sudan the task of dealing with the questions of relief, human rights and peace in the southern Sudan. I say this is bizarre because these questions are dealt with either in the United Nations or at the regional level. The first question, relief, and the second, human rights, are dealt with in the relevant organs of the United Nations, respectively, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Commission on Human Rights. The issue of peace in the southern Sudan is being dealt with at the regional level by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the support of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and the group of IGAD partners, of which the United States is a member. The Sudan will continue to follow

closely the steps taken by the United States Administration and will take the necessary measures to protect its national interests. Here I would like to reaffirm that the Government of the Sudan is willing to settle its differences with the United States of America through dialogue and the initiatives already taken in this regard, with a view to breaking the stalemate. This interest continues even after the cruel American aggression against the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory. Yet this interest of ours must be met with an objective response by the other party. Hence, we call upon the United Nations and peace-loving countries to urge the United States Administration to take positive steps towards the normalization of relations with the Sudan and to desist from interference in its internal affairs, which only results in prolonging the civil war and death and suffering for the Sudanese people.

The Sudan believes that the United States, as a great Power concerned with world and regional peace, could play an important role in the settlement of the Sudan's problems. But for the United States to play that role, we demand that it show neutrality and desist from injustice and aggression.

The delegation of the Sudan is of the view that the Millennium Assembly, in which all world leaders will participate, is an important occasion for the United Nations to enhance its role and its neutrality. In this regard, we propose that the Millennium Summit declaration contain the following: a reaffirmation of the importance of peaceful coexistence; respect for plurality and diversity and the promotion of dialogue between various cultures and religions; a reaffirmation of the need to achieve security and stability by resorting to the United Nations for the settlement of conflicts between States; a reaffirmation of the need to coordinate international efforts for the achievement of development and the eradication of poverty; and a reaffirmation of the resolve of the international community to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In this regard, we would like to state our understanding that the adoption of a declaration by the Millennium Summit will not detract from the United Nations Charter, which embodies lofty and noble principles valid for all time.

In conclusion, most of the people of the Sudan are adherents of Islam and Christianity. Thus, the Sudan has a rich legacy of tolerance and coexistence between religions and cultures. Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ — peace be upon him — teaches fraternity, tolerance and succour for the weak. Islam, the last of the revealed religions, has brought an integrated way of life that upholds the value of freedom and thought. It also consecrates the principle of coexistence between religions and cultures. The Holy Koran states,

> "Invite (all) to the Way
> Of thy Lord with wisdom
> And beautiful preaching;
> And argue with them
> In ways that are best
> And most gracious."
>
> (*The Holy Koran, XVI:125*).

The Acting President: In connection with a remark made by an earlier speaker, may I remind speakers that only the statement as actually delivered by the speaker to the General Assembly will be reflected in the proceedings of the meeting.

Before giving the floor to the next speaker, may I ask the remaining speakers, due to the late hour, to adhere to the voluntary 20-minute time-limit for statements.

I now give the floor to the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mr. Nizar Madani.

Mr. Madani (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. His election to this eminent position reflects the appreciation of the international community for him personally and for the positive role played by country, Namibia, in the international arena. I am confident that his presidency at this session will be an effective factor in achieving the objectives to which the international community aspires under the present critical circumstances.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey to Mr. Didier Opertti, Foreign Minister of Uruguay and President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, our appreciation, esteem and praise for his effective, wise and objective conduct of the Assembly's work. I am also pleased to express my appreciation and esteem to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who manages the affairs of this international Organization with great competence born of experience and who makes continuous efforts and persistent endeavours to achieve peace, security and stability in our modern world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also pleased to welcome the admission of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the membership of the United Nations and hopes that their admission will further enhance the effectiveness of the Organization in achieving the noble goals it was created for.

Some years have passed since we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. That celebration was a glorious occasion on which we reviewed the purposes and principles of this international Organization and the opportunities and challenges it had faced over the previous decades. We also reviewed its achievements in maintaining world peace and security and the difficulties and obstacles that it managed to deal with and overcome through the belief of its Members and the nobility of its ideals and objectives. The existence of this Organization, and its ability to find solutions to many of the problems that have rocked our turbulent world, despite all the challenges it has faced, makes us all the more convinced of the vitality of its role, a role that has become more pressing and urgent due to recent developments in the world.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a founding Member of this Organization, continues to hold the same ideals and values that motivated it to join this universal effort with the other founding Members. The founders called for the rejection of war and the establishment of peace and for constructive cooperation among all peoples of this world. This was after a series of disasters and catastrophes had overwhelmed the human race during two destructive world wars that claimed millions of lives and left behind devastation and ruin.

Wars and military confrontations are no longer thought of as politics or diplomacy by other means. Violence and warfare with modern lethal weapons can never be an effective means to attain political ends, nor a viable approach to achieving diplomatic gains. In today's world there is no victor in any military confrontation.

Our Organization's objective of achieving cooperation in social and economic areas among peoples of the world is no longer a mere wish or luxury; in fact, it has become an unavoidable necessity as a result of recent political and economic developments, as well as of major advances and revolutions, unprecedented in human history, in technology and communications. As a result of these changes and developments, the world has been transformed from a vast collection of entities and multilateral trends and patterns into a village in which every part is affected by what ails the other part. These parts are interdependent as regards many of their vital needs and environmental conditions. The concept of globalization, which has become an integral part of our daily discourse, is nothing more than a condensed formula for the intellectual and existential changes that have overtaken the lives of our people and the work of States in the last two decades. If we are going to deal with this phenomenon in a way that emphasizes the positives and discards the negatives, we must adjust to it by developing our institutions and procedures.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia confirms, as it always has in the past, its steady commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and would like to reiterate the need for supporting this Organization and its specialized agencies. They provide a viable framework for cooperation between countries and peoples for facing the tidal wave of globalization. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also emphasizes once again that the ability of this international Organization to resolve global problems and to fulfil its basic responsibilities depends very much on the political will of the Member States to implement the principles, ideals, visions and expectations embodied in the Organization's Charter. What is meant by political will here is the degree to which each Member State is ready to carry out its commitment, adhere to the letter of the Charter of the United Nations and submit its conduct to the rules of the Charter. In this regard, my Government is quite cognizant of the importance of modernizing the agencies of our Organization in a manner that enables the Organization to play its required role and to deal with the new developments that are taking place in contemporary international relations.

The Security Council, being responsible for preserving international peace and security, remains the pivot around which different kinds of ideas for reform are being expressed. In this regard, my country's point of view continues to be based on a deep conviction that any restructuring of the Security Council must endeavour to improve its capabilities to perform effectively its role under the Charter and to be more active in implementing its own resolutions and in dealing with international crises. In addition, the policies of the Council should harmonize with the will of the General Assembly in a manner that achieves the required balance and the desired objectivity.

The General Assembly resolution declaring 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations manifests the desire of the international community to enter the third millennium firmly resolved to see harmony, justice and equality prevail among nations. It also shows the Assembly's desire for everyone to participate in building a world that is balanced in terms of interests and mutual benefits in which people enjoy equitable living conditions free from fear, terror, hunger and poverty; a world in which the principles of justice, triumph and peace and prosperity are available to all. The dialogue among civilizations is the ideal alternative to theories of conflict and of the inevitable clash of civilizations. This compels us to affirm the importance of dialogue and harmony among nations and the need to observe differences in the nature of societies and in their beliefs, and to respect peoples' and nations' freedom of choice, as well as the need to abide by the rules of international law.

This Organization, in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, has been preoccupied throughout its history with the Middle East question and the achievement of a permanent and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. When, in Madrid at the end of October 1991, the peace process was launched — with all its bilateral and multilateral tracks and on the basis of principles accepted by all parties to the conflict — everyone believed that a new era of peace, stability and growth was looming and that this era would put an end to the phase of wars and conflicts that had exhausted the energies and capabilities of the peoples of the region. In fact, the peace process in all its aspects did move forward and some progress has been achieved, especially on the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks. The multilateral talks relating to regional cooperation also gained some ground. The peace process then suffered from paralysis and reached an impasse due to the policies and practices of the former Israeli Government, and in spite of the fact that the Arabs had declared peace an irrevocable strategic choice. However, this did not change the practices of the former Israeli Government and its disregard for the principles of the peace process, nor remedy its failure to fulfil its obligations under the agreements signed with the Palestinians, including the Wye River Memorandum.

At present there is an attempt to revive the peace process. Assurances issued by the new Israeli Prime Minister indicate that he intends to activate the peace process on all tracks. The Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, signed on 4 September of this year, could be a good step if followed by similar steps to move the process towards the bases and principles that were established at the Madrid Conference — the principle of land for peace, first and foremost.

On the Palestinian track, peace requires withdrawal from the occupied territories and the restoration of all the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians, including their right to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. The final status issue of Jerusalem should be addressed in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 252 (1968). Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories, and Israel should refrain from undertaking any unilateral measures that prejudice the status of that sacred city. It is imperative and natural that any comprehensive and permanent settlement address the issue of the return of the Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). It should also address the issues of the release of prisoners, settlements and water resources, among others.

As for the Syrian track, negotiations should resume at the point where they left off because of a decision of the previous Israeli Government. It is well known that Syria remains willing and prepared to reach a comprehensive and permanent solution based on the principle of land for peace.

The Lebanese track is subject to Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and western Bekaa.

More than nine years after Iraq's aggression against the State of Kuwait, it is still procrastinating on the implementation of crucial parts of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Iraqi people are still paying the price for crimes committed by their regime and for its continual challenges to international legality. In spite of all Arab and international initiatives and proposals aimed at finding an effective mechanism and process to lift the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq and to end the suffering of the Iraqi people, the Iraqi Government has not responded in a manner that might help move matters in the right direction.

What encourages the Iraqi Government to continue manoeuvring and procrastinating is the fact that the Security Council itself is unable to take action due to the inability of its permanent members to agree on a common approach and on the proposals under discussion. These proposals are aimed at finding a way out of the current crisis by reviving the inspection and monitoring of

banned Iraqi weapons and at regulating the present and future relations between Iraq and the United Nations. No matter what the circumstances, Iraq should be required to fully implement all international resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait and to cooperate seriously with the International Committee of the Red Cross to achieve the release of all Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees, as well as the restitution of Kuwaiti property.

It should also refrain from all provocative or aggressive acts against the State of Kuwait and other neighbouring countries, in compliance with Security Council resolution 949 (1994), and prove its peaceful intentions towards its neighbours in word and deed. This is the proper way to put an end to the human suffering for which the Iraqi regime bears sole responsibility. The pain which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its sisterly countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) feel towards such human suffering is commensurate only with their keenness to preserve the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

Relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council member States have lately been buoyed by the positive attitude of the Iranian Government. Yet, there remain outstanding issues to be resolved, particularly that of the three United Arab Emirates islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. The GCC Foreign Ministers, with the approval and blessing of the United Arab Emirates Government, decided to refer the matter to a tripartite committee entrusted with creating a climate conducive to direct negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This trend reflects the desire of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the outstanding issues in a positive spirit. We feel optimistic about this issue in the light of the demonstrated desire of President Mohammad Khatami to open a new chapter in Iran's relations with the Gulf countries, characterized by good-neighbourliness, non-interference in internal affairs and constructive cooperation to the benefit and interest of both sides.

Just when it seemed that the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina was resolved in accordance with the provisions of the Dayton Accords — which laid the ground for Bosnian independence and sovereignty, paved the way for the return of refugees, provided for the pursuit and arrest of officials responsible for the crimes of ethnic cleansing and genocide, and the establishment of domestic peace — the Balkan region witnessed a crisis in Kosovo no less devastating in its human dimensions than that in Bosnia. Like the Bosnians, the Kosovars were exposed to ethnic cleansing, genocide, repression, intimidation and forced deportation at the hands of Serbian forces as the world watched. Once again, the United Nations faced the problem of dealing with a dangerous situation that threatened the entire Balkan region. This situation was reversed only by the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces after Serbia refused to accept the provisions of the Rambouillet agreement.

Resort to military force without a United Nations mandate to resolve such problems might not be the ideal way to settle international crises, but it becomes an unavoidable necessity whenever the Security Council, due to disunity and disagreements between its permanent Members, fails to fulfil its role in maintaining world peace and security. We hope that this pattern will not be repeated, so that the United Nations may preserve its dignity and integrity.

Many regions of the world remain plagued by wars, regional and ethnic conflicts, border disputes and national and tribal conflicts. Fighting between the Afghan factions still rages, denying Afghanistan and its people the fruits of liberation from foreign occupation. It is regrettable to see that some have exploited the current situation in Afghanistan to turn the country into a terrorist haven and training base, thereby contributing to the country's insecurity and instability and exposing the Afghan people to more suffering. My country supports the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Conference to re-establish peace and security throughout Afghanistan.

The Pakistani-Indian conflict over Jammu and Kashmir remains a source of tension and instability between the two neighbourly countries, especially after the recent military escalation between them. We call on both sides to exercise utmost restraint and to settle the conflict through negotiations in compliance with United Nations resolutions, which recognize the right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been following with great concern the latest developments in East Timor. While it welcomes the positive stand taken by the Indonesian Government, especially its cooperation with the United Nations, it wishes to affirm the need to respect the regional sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia and the importance of peace and security throughout the region.

The scenes of fighting and armed conflict between brothers in Africa, especially in the Horn, are a source of pain to us. These conflicts will only deepen wounds and enlarge the circle of poverty and distress. In this regard, we still have high expectations in the wisdom of the leaders of that great continent to consider the ultimate interests of their nations and to resolve conflicts through peaceful means.

The international community was pleased to put an end to the Lockerbie issue, which caused much suffering for Libya and its people. We look forward to a Security Council resolution that would lead to a final lifting of all sanctions imposed on Libya by virtue of its positive reaction to international appeals and its adherence to all conditions related to this issue.

I would also like to praise the people of Algeria for the great mandate they gave their new leadership to move forward with the suggested reconciliation plan that aims at ending the era of differences and violence, which was extremely painful for the fraternal people of Algeria.

The Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is keenly interested in the ongoing efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including the Arabian Gulf region. This is demonstrated through its support for the efforts of the Arab League at its 101st session, which called for making that sensitive part of the world a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological. In this respect, we are greatly concerned about Israel's continued refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), thus keeping its nuclear programmes outside the range of international inspections and constituting a serious threat to the region's security.

We believe in the urgent need to increase the effectiveness of the NPT through the activation and universalization of the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards system. We also find it extremely important to establish the necessary controls and measures that would assist in achieving progress in all areas of the comprehensive disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1 (I) of 1946.

The scourge of terrorism, which strikes indiscriminately throughout the world, has become an international phenomenon with grave consequences, requiring systematic international efforts to contain and combat it. The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has regularly condemned terrorism in all its forms, lending its voice to international efforts aimed at combating this dangerous phenomenon. What needs to be emphasized here is that violence and terrorism are universal phenomena not restricted to a certain people, race or religion. Precisely because of the comprehensiveness and universality of terrorism, the only way to combat it effectively is through unified and collective international action within the framework of the United Nations, which alone can put an end to terrorism, save the lives of innocent people and preserve the independence and sovereignty of the countries of the world. Fighting terrorism calls for international cooperation against sheltering terrorist groups and individuals, thereby preventing them from exploiting the territories and laws of the States where they live to pursue their destructive activities, regardless of their pretexts and arguments.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers environmental issues and environmental protection of key importance, as evidenced by their prominent place in our domestic and foreign policies. This is because we believe that a safe decent life for mankind is directly connected to the environment. That is why the Kingdom has actively participated in all relevant conferences and international gatherings, symposiums and arrangements. We have also become party to several regional and international agreements that are geared towards this cause. We only hope that international efforts related to the problems of the environment will be formulated in a balanced and objective manner based on serious scientific facts and studies that take into account development needs in the developing world. We call upon all States to abide by Agenda 21. We also urge the industrialized States in particular to live up to their obligations regarding the transfer of environment-friendly technology to the developing nations.

The emerging phenomenon of globalization, which is forcing geographic borders to recede and sovereignty and political barriers to disappear, has become an issue to which all nations must adjust. We are required now, more than ever before, to address this phenomenon in a way that brings about a world of balanced interests, mutual benefits and equal opportunities for all. If we are to achieve this goal, the developing nations must redouble their domestic environmental efforts in order to catch up with the global economy. They are further called upon to intensify their efforts to remove the barriers that hinder their integration into the multifaceted world trade system. They are also required to adjust their economic policies

and to establish the infrastructures necessary for their manufactured goods to meet the standard specifications of the importing countries.

In return, industrial and economically developed nations should contribute to the fulfilment of the desired goals in the following ways: first, by displaying greater flexibility in the conditions of admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) by giving developing countries longer interim periods that are in line with their development needs and to help them adjust their systems and laws to the requirements of membership; secondly, by giving developing countries enhanced opportunities to benefit from the system of general preferences, to expand distribution of their products and to provide guarantees for greater stability and transparency in the regimes governing those products; thirdly, by limiting the imposition of protective measures by industrialized nations on major imports from developing nations that hinder their integration into world markets and reduce their ability to compete, and removing the obstacles faced by developing countries; and fourthly, ensuring that industrial nations carry out their obligations to developing countries, as set forth in the Uruguay Round and in the WTO agreements, by providing direct and indirect assistance and restructuring or forgiveness of debts. The industrialized nations should also open their markets to the developing nations' exports and refrain from adopting unjust procedures to limit the size and flow of such exports.

In this context, it is worth noting that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of contributions to the promotion and development of developing countries, whether bilaterally or multilaterally. In the same vein, and in view of the Kingdom's desire to shape future trends in the world economy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has applied for admission to the WTO and hopes, God willing, to gain the support of friendly nations in order to finalize the admission procedure as soon as possible.

As we prepare for the third millennium, we are overwhelmed by different feelings and emotions. In view of the conflicts and the social, economic, cultural and environmental challenges that we currently face, optimism is mixed with pessimism about the future of our world in the coming historical period. If the purpose of creating the United Nations was to convert the logic of war and confrontation into the language of dialogue and cooperation, at a time when the cost of using military force has become exorbitant and the outcome uncertain, we now live in a new period full of signs that require us to work together as hard as possible and to cooperate not only in the face of political and military challenges, but also in confronting the new challenges of contemporary life, with all its complexities and complications, which can only be solved or managed through organized collective effort.

Our firm belief that the United Nations can play a major role in dealing with current issues and enhancing international cooperation in order to resolve and contain these issues makes us more determined than ever to support this Organization and endorse its constructive role. One of the valuable lessons we have learned from United Nations activities is the need to enable our Organization to detect crises and to move to contain them before they erupt by applying preventive diplomacy to the fullest extent. Moving to manage crises before they grow is the best way to avoid their harmful consequences and repercussions.

In conclusion, I must re-emphasize a basic fact: in order to solve today's problems it has become vitally necessary for us to cooperate in a spirit of total disinterest, objectivity and responsibility. The future of the United Nations, which is also our future, depends on this.

Allah says in the Holy Koran:

"Help ye one another
In righteousness and piety,
But help ye not one another
In sin and rancour".

(The Holy Koran, V:2)

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, His Excellency Mr. Sama Banya.

Mr. Banya (Sierra Leone): On behalf of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the Government and people of Sierra Leone, and on my own personal behalf, I would like to congratulate Mr. Gurirab most heartily on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This is the last session before the end of this century and today we have only 92 days until the beginning of a new millennium.

We welcome Mr. Gurirab's unanimous election to preside over this body. With his long experience, both in the public service of his country and in the international arena, I have no doubt that he will be able to steer the deliberations of the fifty-fourth session to a successful

conclusion. I want to assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation during his tenure of office.

The affairs that confront us as a country continue to cause problems all over the globe. We are faced with situations that we cannot completely handle. Permit me to convey the thanks and appreciation of my Government to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to his staff for their dedicated service to the United Nations in the never-ending quest to attain international peace and security. Mr. Annan has spared no efforts in drawing the attention of the international community, as well as that of the Security Council, to the tragic situation in Sierra Leone, stressing the urgent need for resources to sustain the Lomé Peace Agreement, recently signed between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and the need to send an appreciable contingent of peacekeepers and United Nations military observers to my country.

The rebel war has gone on for a long time. Its intensification culminated in the invasion of the capital, Freetown, by the RUF/Armed Forces Revolutionary Council junta on 6 January 1999. I have no doubt that many members must have watched, heard or read of the ensuing mayhem, even though those ghastly events were overlooked because of the focus of the international media and, indeed, of the international community on Kosovo. There was a time when we felt that the international community had abandoned us to our fate.

Our people have gone through a very difficult and devastating period, covering more than eight years. We are now ready to put that nightmare behind us, to move forward and to do so quickly. The most important element in this is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, under the supervision of United Nations peacekeepers and observers and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

My Government therefore welcomes the eighth report of the Secretary-General on Sierra Leone to the Security Council. Among other things, the report recommends the deployment of sufficient numbers of peacekeepers and observers, as well as support staff. The Secretary-General stresses the urgent need for the mobilization of adequate resources into a special trust fund for this purpose. My delegation welcomes with gratitude the contributions of the Governments of the United Kingdom and Canada and the World Bank to the trust fund, and the recent recommendation of the Secretary- General to the Security Council to deploy up to 6,000 peacekeepers and observers. The need for an early decision on this cannot be overemphasized.

A special conference is to take place shortly in Washington, D.C., for pledges to the fund and for other post-conflict programmes, including humanitarian assistance, the welfare of refugees and the welfare of children associated with the war. I would like to thank all our friends in the donor community who will be participating in that meeting and to plead with them to donate generously.

Since the signing of the Lomé Agreement, the peace has been generally holding. There have been a few severe hiccups, but because of the determination of all to move forward, we have been able to contain the situation. The war went on for a long time, the rebels were used to obtaining everything they needed by the use of force. Since the Agreement, they have simply been waiting for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme to commence. The delay in implementing this could be a factor in the restlessness observed in some elements from time to time. It is a dangerous void.

The programme itself is under the chairmanship of our President, and because of the importance that our people attach to it, the civilian population has established a fund that is receiving modest donations from an already traumatized and war-weary people. Unfortunately, the anxiety and enthusiasm of our people have yet to be matched by those of the international community.

The speed and the extent of interventions in Bosnia and in Kosovo, and more recently in East Timor, clearly demonstrate the capacity of the international community to stop human suffering when it is willing to do so. Our people have been baffled at the delay in implementing the Sierra Leone programme.

Although the heinous atrocities committed in Sierra Leone by the RUF and its collaborators barely received attention from the international community, various human rights groups denounced the United Nations for signing the Lomé Peace Agreement with a reservation on amnesty provision. May I at this stage appeal to the international community not to do anything that would adversely affect the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

For the average Sierra Leonean, the Peace Agreement was a bitter pill to swallow, but an essential

pill to end the atrocities in the country. However, in order to ensure accountability, a truth and reconciliation commission was provided for in the agreement. It may need to be backed by an international inquiry body, such as has been proposed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Once again I would like to put on record my country's indebtedness and gratitude to the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and four countries in particular — Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana and Mali — which contributed troops to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

As a new millennium dawns, the problems facing my country — and indeed many developing countries — are multiple; not least is the problem of finding a consistent set of policies and institutions that will enable us to have sustainable economic growth. Coupled with this is the fact that newly elected democratic Governments like ours are facing the paradox of how to sustain democracy in an environment where hard economic decisions are needed. In an increasingly shrinking world, the problems of developing countries, including those of Sierra Leone, ought to be seen as global problems.

The impact of these problems is felt by all in the form of environmental devastation, global warming, economic migrations and conflict, both local and regional. These problems affect the developed world in the form of increased immigration, greater welfare bills, slower economic growth and increased defence budgets, due to greater instability in the third world and the increased need for conflict resolution and prevention.

In these circumstances, the continuing decline in the levels of development assistance has not helped the African situation. Globalization cannot be effected as a "one-way street" where all the vehicles travel North, leaving only exhaust fumes in the South. A level playing field is required, and this cannot be achieved with Africa's heavy debt burden. Sierra Leone welcomes the 1999 Cologne Debt Initiative, which enhances the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative framework for debt relief. We agree that further efforts are needed for greater focus on the priority objective of poverty reduction. At the same time, my delegation hopes that agreement will soon be reached to shorten the period during which countries can qualify to be part of the HIPC Debt Initiative framework.

With the cold war over, mankind had looked forward to a period of peace and universal development. But, as the British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook observed at the recent Security Council meeting on trafficking in small arms, small arms have caused more death and destruction in recent times than weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, my delegation agrees with the general view that the illegal arms trade is as dangerous as drugs, both serving as instruments of destruction of civilian lives and of socio-economic structures.

The proliferation of trade in light weapons, financed by cash from the sale of precious minerals, such as diamonds and gold, is at the core of Africa's conflicts and their prolongation. My delegation therefore welcomes the recent decision of the Security Council on this nefarious trade. We call on the international community to support the Security Council decision so as to effectively prevent the availability and flow of arms to conflict areas. The decision should not be left to the merchants of death, whose only interest is money, by whatever means.

The United Nations, despite its occasional imperfectability, remains an essential institution for moving international relations towards cooperative security. Its operational and procedural capabilities need to be strengthened for the next century. My Government fully supports the Declaration of Algiers, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in Algeria from 12-14 July 1999. The Declaration called, *inter alia*, for the democratization of international relations, the democratization of the United Nations and the Security Council and the recognition of Africa's legitimate position in this Organization.

My Government also reinforces its belief in the Harare Declaration, calling for the unconditional allocation of two permanent Security Council seats to Africa.

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Smith (United Kingdom): I should like to speak briefly in exercise of the right of reply to respond to the remarks about the Chagos Archipelago made this

morning by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius.

The British Government maintains that the British Indian Ocean Territory is British and has been since 1814. It does not recognize the sovereignty claim of the Mauritian Government. However, the British Government has recognized Mauritius as the only State which has a right to assert a claim of sovereignty when the United Kingdom relinquishes its own sovereignty. Successive British Governments have given undertakings to the Government of Mauritius that the Territory will be ceded when no longer required for defence purposes.

The British Government remains open to discussions regarding arrangements governing the British Indian Ocean Territory or the future of the Territory. The British Government has stated that when the time comes for the Territory to be ceded it will liaise closely with the Government of Mauritius.

The question of access to the British Indian Ocean Territory is at present before the courts in the United Kingdom, and is therefore *sub judice*. The Government of the United Kingdom has the matter under careful consideration and cannot comment further.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The South Korean Foreign Minister has talked about the "sunshine" policy, describing it as if it were contributing to the improvement of North-South relations, with a view to misleading the people of the world, even at the United Nations. Although his allegation, full of fabrication and distortion and aimed at confrontation with the North, does not merit a penny's worth of comment, we believe it is necessary to make clear the essence of the "sunshine" policy and the ill intention of the South Korean authorities in order to promote representatives' understanding.

The trend towards reconciliation and rapprochement which was created following the end of the cold war has yet to prevail on the Korean peninsula, due mainly to the strategic intentions of the United States and the consistent reliance of the South Korean authorities on outside forces.

Against this backdrop, North-South relations are now at their worst level. The South Korean authorities are now pursuing an unprecedentedly tricky policy of antagonizing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea hand in hand with outside forces. They loudly proclaim engagement and generosity as though the "sunshine" policy were intended to improve North-South relations.

However, the "sunshine" policy is an anti-reunification and anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea confrontational policy aimed at changing the ideas and social system existing in the North. It is also a provocation against, and mockery of, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The current Chief Executive of South Korea openly acknowledges that the essence of the "sunshine" policy is based on the same principle as was utilized by the United States in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. Besides, the South Korean authorities are now engaged in the plot, in military alliance with countries such as the United States and Japan, on an almost daily basis under the pretext of the "sunshine" policy.

Any attempt on their part to deny and do away with the ideas and social system in the North will inevitably lead to conflict and war and this could happen at any moment. The South Korean authorities are now talking loudly about reconciliation and cooperation with us while promoting the "sunshine" policy, but it is, in essence, preposterous hypocrisy and deceit, as well as a mockery of the international community.

Under these circumstances, in which the Draconian National Security Law that defines the North as a permanent enemy to be exterminated and that criminalizes minor contacts, praise and encouragement, sympathy and even the exchange of letters with the North remains in place, how is it possible to realize reconciliation and cooperation? The existence of a concrete wall remaining as a symbol of the national division and the military exercises being staged almost year-round in collaboration with foreign forces are incompatible with reconciliation and cooperation.

South Korea acts as if the North had greatly benefited from the "sunshine" policy in the economic field, but this too is a lie.

Frankly, they mobilized many representatives of the mass media for the purpose of publicizing the economic and humanitarian assistance given to the North, but in reality they are playing dirty games. For example, they are pretending to show their sympathy for the humanitarian situation of the North, but actually they are visiting countries to ask them not to give assistance to the North. By so doing, they are slandering and obstructing the flow of humanitarian assistance in one way or another.

We have so far established a self-sufficient national economy of which we are proud. But recently we have had some economic difficulties due to natural disaster and the collapse of the socialist market. Nevertheless, we will build a strong and rich country by resisting the slander and the current economic difficulties.

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization has been described as a gift given to us out of generosity, but in fact the construction of the light water reactor power plant, which is the central mission of that organization is an obligation that the United States assumed under the Agreed Framework signed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States in 1994. South Korea, Japan and other countries became members of the organization at the request of the United States. However, the construction of the light water reactor power plant has just been inaugurated, and not a single stone has yet been laid. Therefore, there is a question as to its completion in the year 2003, as envisaged in the Agreed Framework.

In addition, there have been recent reports that the construction of the light water reactor power plant is only being paid lip service, because of the prediction that my country would soon collapse. This makes prospects for its construction more questionable. As for the tourism in Mount Kumgang it was out of our genuine love for our national compatriots, our benevolence and our generosity that we have extended the opportunity to the South Koreans who very much want to visit Mount Kumgang. Unfortunately, however, South Korea is including some undesirable people among the tourists in order to create an artificial obstacle to the work of tourism and in this way to further damage our prestige.

As to our implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Safeguards Agreement, South Korea has no right to intervene. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework clearly provides for all the obligations of both my country and the United States. We are now faithfully fulfilling our obligation in keeping with the implementation of the Agreed Framework. The responsibility for the non-realization of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula lies with the United States, which is still maintaining its commitment of providing a nuclear umbrella for South Korea. The responsibility also lies with South Korea, which is asking for that commitment to be maintained.

As can clearly be seen, the "sunshine" policy is an anti-reunification and anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea confrontational policy camouflaged as reconciliation and cooperation. If the South Korean authorities are truly interested in peace and the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula, they should abandon the "sunshine" policy and the policy of relying on outside foreign forces; should take a position of national independence and demand the withdrawal of United States troops from South Korea; should abolish the National Security Law; and should respond to our proposal for confederal reunification on the basis of the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity.

Mr. Gold (Israel): The statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', asserts that commitments were made by the parties during past Syrian-Israeli negotiations that constitute internationally binding undertakings which have been deposited with the United States. These assertions do not accurately reflect the facts, and therefore a clarification by Israel is required.

Israel has not made any commitment to withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967. It must be reiterated that the only basis of negotiations between Israel and Syria is Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as stated in the Madrid invitation, which called for the establishment of secure and recognized boundaries and not for a withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: The allegations we have just heard from the representative of Israel require a precise and well-pondered response, especially since American efforts are under way to resume peace negotiations at the point where they were left off. However, given the late hour, not wishing to detain representatives, and heeding the Chair's appeal to be brief, my delegation reserves the right to reply at the end of tomorrow's meeting so that we might be able to inform the General Assembly of the actual state of affairs.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.